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Marc Gaborieau, Le Nepal et ses populations, Editions
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Nepal: Hindu-Tribal Interface

P.R. Sharma

Introduction

The Himalayas have long provided a contact zone for Hindus and diverse tribal² groups. The experience of such contact in Nepal exhibits certain unique features that are rarely seen in other regions of Hindu South Asia. Interaction between these groups in Nepali had been a much more intimate affair than probably anywhere in the Indian sub-continent. Further, this interaction has occurred over a long time in history so that certain forms of social relationship which developed between these groups even received formal recognition in the legal code of the Nepalese State. This legal recognition refers mainly to the customs of inter-marriage between high-caste Hindu males and the women of the tribal groups.

Thus, the Hindu-tribal dichotomy loses its sharpness in Nepal to a far greater extent than it does in India. The outlook in India regarding the relationship between these two groups is still highly coloured by expressions like savarna in opposition to avarna. The former describes a people encompassed within a social system following the varna division, whereas the latter describes those who remain quite outside it. The tribal groups in India are even now considered a world apart by the caste-Hindus there, and social intercourse with these groups into the "scheduled" categories in the constitution of India, and granting them rights to special social benefits has only helped to further heighten the notion of division between these groups.

The Hindu-tribal relationship in Nepal has never been characterized as one of total isolation, either in the past or in current times. Nevertheless, some of the early 19th-century European writers on Nepal, who were serving in the British-Indian government and were familiar with the Indian social order gave an "over isolated" picture of the Hindu and the tribal groups in Nepal. Contemporary western anthropologists working in Nepal have usually emphasized this division even further.

An attempt is made in the following paper to critically review and clarify the problem of Nepal's Hindu-tribal relationships. I will suggest that the emphasis on a sharp Hindu-tribal dichotomy in Nepal suffers from the lack of an historical perspective. By combining an historical with an anthropological approach, I will attempt to show that the ethnic groups in Nepal are more interrelated than divided and that the notions of "Hindu" and "tribal" here are perhaps better understood as a continuum than as a dichotomy. This idea will be further highlighted by contrasting the situation in Nepal with that of India.

One matter needs to be explained here before I discuss the theme of this paper further. The Hindus described in this paper refer to the Nepali-speaking parbatiya Hindus only, and the model within which I have attempted to examine the Hindu-tribal relationship follows their state-promulgated legal code. In this code even the Newars, who are a distinct community with their own traditions of caste and a separate internal ranking system, are lumped together with the other tribal groups such as the Gurung, Magar, Rai and Limbu in the social category of the matawali ("liquor drinkers"). Contact between the Newars and the parbatiya Hindus has been carried out over two thousand years in the Kathmandu Valley and this topic would require a separate paper to do it justice.

The Setting

It is well known that Nepal is the only Hindu kingdom in the world today. According to its constitution, the sovereign ruler, who is a king, must be a Thakuri of the ruling Shah dynasty and a follower of the Aryan Hindu religion (Constitution of Nepal, articles 3 and 20). Of the 12 million people of Nepal reported in census of 1972, over 75% are classed as Hindus and the rest as tribals. For a country of Nepal's size, the ethnic diversity is not only extremely rich, but what has been called the tribal population is also quite large. It is certainly much larger than the estimated 7% tribal population in India.

In Nepal these diverse ethnic and cultural groups are settled all over the variegated landscape and have adapted themselves to their surrounding ecology. Some of the ethnic groups in the Tarai, whose population ranges from a few thousand among the smaller groups to several hundred thousand among the larger ones, are the Meche, Satar, Rajbansi, Dhimal and Bodo in the east and the Dhangar in the central Tarai. But the largest ethnic group of the Tarai is the Tharu, who have settled in Nepal everywhere from east to west. The middle hills, a densely populated region that alone carries two-thirds of Nepal's population, present an even richer spectacle of cultures and peoples. This area is often considered as the cultural heartland of the country. One finds the valley-bottoms and the low altitudes of these middle hills inhabited by the smaller ethnic groups such as the Raji, the Majhi, the Bote, the Kumal, the Danuwar, the Darai, etc. On slightly higher slopes but still along the southern edges of the middle-hills are the Raute (a semi-nomadic, vanishing tribe), the famous Magar, the Chepang, the Thami and the Hayu. Paralleling them along the middle and northern edges of the Nepalese middle hills are the more well-known and populous ethnic groups of Nepal such as the Gurung, Tamang, Sunuwar, Rai, Limbu and the Lepcha. The zone close to the high Himalayas, along the Himalayan south face and in the trans-Himalayan valleys, live the Bhote (Tibetan) populations of many regional and dialectical groups, the Sherpas and the Thakalis being the most well-known among them. The ubiquitous parbatiya Hindus are found settled throughout Nepal, interspersed among all these cultural pockets (Bista: 1972) except in the Tibetan cultural zone in the extreme north.

Hindu-tribal dichotomy

The totality of social order in Nepal today must be understood in terms of this cultural pluralism. This pluralism has been observed and interpreted from different perspectives over the last one hundred fifty to two hundred years. One angle of observation is provided in the writings of Westerners, beginning with Hamilton, who was serving the British-Indian government in the early 19th century. Hamilton's view strongly separates the tribal population from the Hindu population. The Hindus, with their caste-stratified society, are contrasted with the tribal groups that follow a more egalitarian social system, speak distinct languages, have their own traditional dress, customs, man-nerisms and beliefs (Hamilton: 1971: 24-25) and who, therefore, should be regarded as non-Hindus. Since Hamilton's time the Hindu-non-Hindu dichotomy has continued to be emphasized by Western scholars, especially anthropologists studying Nepal, and the force of this argument has sharply increased in its vehemence in recent times. These kinds of studies in Nepal, therefore, meet with an official disfavour, since the present government is interested in promoting "national integration". An ethnologist who studies one of these minority ethnic groups tends to cast it in an exclusive situation by isolating it from other extraneous elements, regarding it as a pure entity and posing it against the larger Hindu groups for all kinds of comparison. Points of similarity detected in this comparison are then explained away as happening through Hindu imposition or domination or are attributed to the more familiar concepts of Sanskritization, Hinduization or even Nepalization (cf. Caplan: 1970).

Another angle of observation for viewing the same Nepalese society is actually historical in origin and is provided by the Hindu Nepalese themselves. The perspective used by the Hindu Nepalese to judge their own society is an out growth of their formulation of an all-encompassing, all-embracing social model in which different participating social units are each given a caste name and definite rank within a hierarchy, no matter how divergent such groups may look or be in their beliefs and practices. Such a model was the officially recognised view in Nepal for centuries and is illustrated in the first legal codification promulgated in 1854 A.D., known as the Muluki Ain (henceforth to be called the legal code in this paper). This document embodied the highest sets of law in the times for which it was compiled and promulgated. It laid down legal procedures for punishing social and economic offences, categorised offences according to their severity and prescribed their punishment. Punishment meted out to separate castes differed both in nature and severity. This code became the most important instrument for regulating inter-caste behaviour and for applying social control in the kingdom as a whole. New editions of this code, with alteration, modification and corrections, appeared later; but its basic social tenets remained unchanged until 1963 A.D., when it was replaced by a new Muluki Ain, which is now in force.

The old code of 1854 presents a four-fold classification of society in which all castes and ethnic groups of Nepal were subsumed. This social universe is paraphrased as car varna chattis jat (four varnas and thirty-six castes). Their names and the order of the hierarchy were as follows:

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | <u>Tagadhari</u> | = Castes wearing sacred thread;
all the Hindu high-caste
consisting of the Brahmans,
Thakuris and Chhetris. |
| | ↓ | |
| | ↓ | |
| 2. | <u>Matawali</u> ³ | = Alcohol drinking castes; all
the tribal groups are gathered
in this class. |
| | ↓ | |
| | ↓ | |
| 3. | <u>Pani na calne
choi chito halnu na parne</u> | = Low service castes whose
touch is not defiling, but
from whom water cannot be
accepted by higher castes. |
| | ↓ | |
| | ↓ | |
| 4. | <u>Pani na calne
choi chito halnu parne</u> | = Untouchable castes. |

It is evident that the framework of a single social order such as presented above involves an ancient Hindu concept. The rulers of Nepal throughout its recorded history have been high-caste Hindus. Therefore, this model can be considered as extended to the ethnic groups by the Hindus. Although this model was, in a sense, imposed on them, the ethnic groups of Nepal have lived under it for such a long time now that this model has extensively pervaded their own outlook.

Bearing this inclusive ranking of groups in mind, it now becomes important to consider what, in the Nepalese context, has been meant by "Hindu" and "non-Hindu". The connotation of the term Hindu to a Nepali has always carried a religious sense. The distinction between 'Hindu' and non-Hindu' as used in Nepal in the last hundred years or so is strictly understood in contexts where it distinguishes the bulk of the Nepalese people from the Muslims or aliens like the Europeans. In the legal code of 1854 A.D., the mention of the word 'Hindu' is limited to a couple of places where such a distinction needed to be made most clearly (code: 157: 4, 9). In the subsequent editions of the legal code, the use of the word 'Hindu' becomes more common, but it is continually used in the context of drawing distinctions between local beliefs and foreign religions such as the Muslim and the Christian religions, or between indigenous people and foreigners (Gaborieau: 1972: 85-91). Indigenous tribal religions, such as those of the Rai and the Limbu, were also considered to be a part of the Hindu religion in this legal Hindu-non-Hindu distinction (Gaborieau: 1972:86). The term Hindu has been used in this way in the legal code even as late as 1963 A.D., the code which is now in use.

For the first time in Nepal, this same legal code has ended caste discrimination as a legal basis for applying the law to Nepalese subjects. In other words, all people have been made theoretically equal before the law irrespective of their caste, creed, sex and tribe. But at the same time ethnic and caste identity has not even now been terminated in the code altogether. Traditional practices can be pursued and are being pursued within the family and within the ethnic groups. Even so, Nepalese society does not look upon these ethnic groups as being too much different from the predominant Hindu group, and the anthropologists' eagerness to use their own social classification system (i.e. Hindu-non-Hindu) in Nepal is not always favoured in official quarters.

Europeans studying Nepal have made social criteria the primary basis for distinguishing Hindu-non-Hindu social groups which is quite different from the religious sense of these terms, as discussed above. Hamilton made clear use of this kind of social criteria. He attributed tribal groups of Nepal with a relatively weak notion of purity and impurity, relaxed food taboos, relaxed marriage rules, and greater freedom of their women -- all characteristics wherein they most clearly differed from the Hindus. He also made a note of the beef-eating habit of these people, especially that of the Magars (Hamilton: 1971: 25-26).

Marriott (1959) has well demonstrated that even in north India, these kinds of social traits or 'attributes' like diet and occupation, do not really distinguish groups or account for the caste ranking⁴ between them. In Nepal, the relative unimportance of these "attributes" as a criteria for distinguishing and ranking groups is also clearly demonstrable. Many Nepalese tribal groups, until about two hundred years ago, appear to have been beef-eaters. The Shah kings apparently tried to put an end to this practice, which was completely antithetical to the Hindu values in Nepal, by issuing strong royal exhortations. One such exhortation was made in 1805 A.D., in the reign of King Girban Bir Bikram Shah (Stiller: 1976:82). Beef-eating was certainly considered an abhorrent practice by the Hindus. But continued adherence to beef-eating of some groups of people would probably not have made them any more inferior than the social status (of matawali) accorded to them already. The Bhotias, who never abandoned the practice of eating yak meat, and the Tamangs, who allegedly continued eating beef, had provided wives to the Ranas and other nobility of Nepal, and offspring born of such marriages have been accommodated into the folds of caste society without any problem.

More points of such divergence between the Hindu groups and the so-called non-Hindu are being emphasized by contemporary anthropologists studying Nepal nowadays. But I would suggest that there is as little justification in pressing this argument of cultural divergence too far as there would be in claiming that these ethnic groups are indivisible members of the Hindu caste order. Disregarding the nature of this dichotomy, a more striking phenomenon about Hindu-tribal contact in

Nepal is the process of synthesis and acculturation between peoples that has been going on for centuries.

Synthesis

The Hindu-tribal synthesis is a fact of Nepal's historicity. The historical process that ensued in the wake of contact between these groups in the Himalayas of Nepal -- which began around the beginning of the Christian era in the Kathmandu Valley; about the 12th century A.D. in the far western hills; and in the 16th and the 17th centuries in other hills further east -- has seen a lot of mutual give and take. As the anthropologists working on Nepal have affirmed, the extent of Sanskritization or Hinduization has been an inescapable feature of this contact (Sharma: 1975: 290-97). But this socialisation process has not been an entirely one-sided affair. Hindu orthodoxy in Nepal has itself been somewhat softened as a result of the Hindu people living in such a close juxtaposition with these other social groups. Relaxed rules of inter-caste marriage, widow re-marriage and easy divorce for women even among high-caste Hindus are some examples of this.

Another fact is that Hinduization was not the result of force and coercion only. In fact, even the old legal code, which is of a much later date, seemed to have adopted a policy of minimal interference and actually allowed the retention 'for the most part of the traditional customs and usages of different local or ethnic communities' (Regmi: 1975: 110). Hindu primacy was asserted only in regard to upholding some basic Hindu values among all castes and ethnic groups, these being the high ritual status of the Brahmans, sacredness and protection to the cow, a ban against the levirate, a prohibition against copulation with women of untouchable caste and violation of commensal rules. The form of the Hindu-tribal contact was one of a balance between total absorption and total exclusion. It is true that Hindu rulers in Nepal meted out a less than equal treatment to members of the indigenous ethnic groups despite their displays of acculturation. Although the position of the tribals in the varna division was an indeterminate one in the earlier periods, in the later Rana times, they were considered as belonging to the low Sudra category.

Of course, this later (Rana) consideration of tribals as Sudra somewhat follows the Indian pattern of excluding tribals from the higher orders of Hindu society. Nevertheless, there is one fundamental difference in inter-caste or caste-tribal interaction as it occurred in different parts of India and in Nepal. The predominant regional Hindu societies in India did not have their social and cultural practices backed by any state authority. Social laws were preserved and respected only within their own group and through tradition. There was no such thing as state-promulgated laws regulating social life by establishing all kinds of social norms and laying down a consensual hierarchy of castes for all to follow on award of punishment for violation. The period of the British rule in India was a fluid social situation from which groups allegedly belonging to inferior positions took measures to socially promote themselves. Srivastava cites the

case of the Johari Bhotias of Kumaon who made a collective bid to change their Bhotia origin completely by abandoning their old life-style and modelling their new behaviour on the high-status, propertied Rajputs and claiming also a Rajput origin for themselves (Srivastava: 1966: 201-11). Cultural approximation with the regional Hindu societies was made and achieved through one's initiatives. But since Nepal's historical experience has been different, its Hindu society functioned under a much more controlled system in which the rulers, on behalf of the state, enunciated social laws and subjected all citizens to follow them. No arbitrary act of self-promotion could have proceeded without the intervention of these laws. Opportunity for social mobility and change in caste status was largely in keeping with the prescribed course of inter-marriage. The social privilege that the tribal people of Nepal enjoyed vis-a-vis Hindus in respect of marriage and the ensuing change in caste for their children puts them on a different standing in relation to the Indian tribals. Such a tribe-caste relationship born from the instance of Nepal may postulate an even stronger case for viewing tribes and castes as a kind of continuum rather than a dichotomy.

Before describing what the legal code actually says about this social mobility and change in a person's caste status, there is yet another interesting and historically significant feature of Nepalese Hinduism that Hamilton and later Hodgson alluded to. This concerns the widely prevailing ideas that the peoples in the plains of India have held about the Hindus of Nepal -- these ideas being so firm that contemporary Europeans like Hamilton and Hodgson were drawn to believe them. According to these ideas, Hindus of Nepal were held inferior in rank to the Hindus of the plains. This is particularly stressed with the Rajputs, who in Nepal are more commonly called the Thakuri, and regarded as a caste of the ruling class; and the Chhetris, who, in the Nepalese caste hierarchy, come one step below Thakuri. The most obvious reason behind this Indian judgement was the arbitrary custom of granting twice-born caste status to members of the tribal groups, a widely prevalent social practice throughout Nepal of which the plains Hindus did not approve. To quote Hamilton here, '... on account of this strictness, the Rajputs, of the western districts are as much courted by those of the plains as those from the east of Kali are scouted' (Hamilton: 1971: 24). Hamilton has claimed that many of the ruling clans of the Thakuri in the Chaubisi kingdoms are actually Magar in origin and that they were arbitrarily raised to Rajput status (Hamilton: 1971: 18). Hodgson has narrated a story in which kings of Gorkha sent emissaries to Mewar to explain their social position to the Rajput court there, and to get recognition of an equal rank from them (Hodgson: 1972: 38). Hamilton writes about the Gorkha's attempt to connect their house with Chitaur (Hamilton: 1971: 26). Hodgson further describes how the Chhetri clan name of Pandey, to which the emissary from Nepal had belonged, gave away the clue of his mixed heredity from his Brahman father and Chhetri mother. There is a saying which is widely current in Nepal and which Sikharnath, the first compiler of clan names of the Nepalese castes, has described in his

book, Thar-gotra pravaravali, in these words: 'Magar genealogies get lost over time, but they can be retraced in the Thakuri villages.' This is an obvious reference to the incidents of the Magars allegedly reappearing with Thakuri names in the villages of Nepal. Hamilton also alludes to some Chhetri who have attained their status through arbitrary and unilateral promotion. Such a doubtful method of caste promotion became the cause the Nepalis' degradation in the eyes of the plains Hindus, who disapproved their blood intermixture and the infiltration of high caste ranks by lower status groups.

There is yet one more factor which is responsible for adding to the ambiguity of the Chhetri caste of Nepal. There is a large group of people living in the districts of Jumla and Tibrikot in far-western Nepal who call themselves Matawali Chhetri. What is most curious about them is that, on the one hand, they join the high caste name 'Chhetri' with a matawali prefix which adds the meaning of 'an alcohol drinking person.' Alcohol consumption is acceptable in their society. In fact, they regard drinking alcohol as an age-old practice and see nothing odd about doing it while being a Chhetri. It is not only alcohol-drinking, but also the presence of some Mongoloid features which make them more akin to one of the Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups living further east of them in Central Nepal, and which distinguishes them sharply from other more highly ranked Hindus. As to their language, they speak a local variant of standard Nepali spoken by all other Hindu groups in that area. These Pabai, as they are also called (Campbell: 1978:II, 6), are suspected to be a relic of the old Indo-Aryan language speaking Khasa tribe that had once settled all over the Himalayan tract, beginning right from Kashmir (Grierson: 1968: 7-8). There is early reference to them in far-western Nepal during the 12th-15th century (Sharma: 1972: 17-19). These Khasas are believed to represent a stock which was only marginally Hinduized to begin with (Grierson: 1968: 4-5; Hodgson: 1972: 38-40). Hamilton remarks in one place how these Khasa, even though they are impure, are called 'Kshatris' in Nepal (Hamilton: 1971: 18). This is borne out also by a line inserted in the legal code of 1854 where it says: 'From hereon tagadhari Khas jat has been granted the ilkap (this word is most likely a corrupt form of the Persian khitab meaning 'title') of Chhetri Jat. In committing this to writing in documents one should first write the name of the person, then his thar(clan), after that the ilkap of Chhetri' (Code: 89: 50). A study of the society and religion of the Matawali Chhetri conducted by Campbell in Jumla has shown how their social model, although its general orientation is Hindu, differs in many forms and details from the more orthodox Brahmanical model of Hinduism (Campbell: 1978: VIII, 14-21). These facts seem to affirm the Khasa as a transitional group in Nepal, passing from one end of the tribal-Hindu continuum to the other.

Let us now turn to examine what the legal code has actually laid down concerning the rights of wearing the sacred thread by children born of mixed marriages. Four entries in the Code of 1854 A.D., under the section of 'granting of (rights to wear) the sacred thread (Code 91: pp. 413-14) are given below in translation:

1. 'If any one gave (the rights to wear) sacred thread to a caste which cannot ever wear it, except by commands of the sovereign ruler, by misrepresenting his caste, snatch away his sacred-thread and degrade him to his previous caste. Fine the person responsible for granting him the thread sixty rupees and the priest responsible for conducting the initiation rites and the preceptor for imparting him the Mantra (of initiation) five rupees each. In default of payment, imprison them in accordance with the law.'
2. 'If a person of the tagadhari caste has set free a female slave of his household and taken her as wife (later); if he has made her his wife even before setting her free in full knowledge of the other members of his household; if this woman had not had a previous husband; if sons and daughters born of this woman have been actually conceived with the semen of the husband (the present tagadhari husband), it is permissible to grant the sacred thread to such sons of this person and to marry off such daughters of his in a proper ritual wedding by the father, brothers (half-brothers from the isogamously wedded wife) and kinsmen. If the person had such children begotten from a slave-woman belonging to another owner, these children may be bought free from the owner in a deal and granted the sacred thread or (if daughters) given away in marriage amidst proper rites. Their mother need not be freed from slavery (in order to be able to do this). There shall be no punishment for a person doing this.'
3. 'A tagadhari person may grant his son, born of his matawali wife of the unenslaveable category, the sacred thread. Should he die (before he is able to do this) his agnates and kinsmen may grant it by conducting appropriate rites of the initiation ceremony. Persons conducting such rites and granting the sacred thread shall not be liable to punishment. If anyone prevents this from happening, fine such a person. If he has extracted a fine for this, recover this fine and return it to the payee and punish (the other person) the same number of times as he has committed (this) offence. In default of payment, imprison him in accordance with the law.'
4. 'A tagadhari person may grant his son, born of his matawali wife of the enslaveable category or of a bondswoman, the sacred thread. Should he die (before he is able to do this) his agnates and kinsmen may do this through a conduct of the proper initiation rites. The person himself is entitled to put on the sacred thread by conducting proper initiation rites. He shall never be enslaveable again.'

It is clear that the ranks of the Chhetri and to some extent the Thakuri have been the most infiltrated by peoples of lower castes and ethnic groups. Hypergamy seems to have swelled the numbers of the Chhetri caste most of all so that it is today Nepal's most numerous and widely settled group. The Chhetri is indeed a unique caste in

Nepal since it was the most open-ended social group in its inception and since it represents the greatest instance of the cultural-biological admixture in Nepal. The Chhetri clans today have preserved a diversity of names in which a large number are Brahman clan names. Chhetris have acquired these clan names through a Brahman father or other Brahman male ancestor. The Chhetri rank devolves on a person not only from a marriage between a Brahmin father and a Chhetri mother, but also from a Brahman father marrying a matawali wife, whether she is in the slaveable or the unslaveable category. Such diverse circumstances of their origin did raise some minor problems of rank difference among them, based on the degree and quality of blood mixture. This is conveyed through the use of the expression jharra (pure) and thima (mixed) as reported by Haimendorf from the Kathmandu Valley (Haimendorf: 1966: 47-56 and Bennett; 1977)⁵. But a way was also devised to move out of a thima designation. Over time one's status would ultimately be raised through one or two marriages in prestigious Chhetri families. It is widely asserted in rural Nepal that issues of hypergamous marriages of the Brahman or Chhetri fathers receive their full jharra Chhetri caste status in three generations. Indeed such processes among the Chhetri have not led to any case of fission nor to the birth of endogamous sub-castes among them. On the contrary, this caste has 'preserved an almost tribal feeling of homogeneity and solidarity' throughout Nepal (Haimendorf: 1966: 63-64). Evidence of what political fruits this caste group has enjoyed as a result of its high status is provided by the fact that all the prime ministers of Nepal in the pre-1951 period have been members of it. The Nepalese aristocracy based in the durbar (palace) of the Kathmandu Valley in the same period was also heavily dominated by Chhetris (Stiller: 1976: 184-215; 288-329).

Conclusion

Today Nepal has inherited a people of mixed race. Its Hindus carry a great deal of tribal blood in their ethnic make-up. This is but one form of syncretism that has taken place in Nepal, the other being the religious syncretism between Hinduism and Buddhism. The significance of a socially accepted racial intermingling like this would probably not mean much for people in other regions of India, but it does bestow a distinct ethnic character to the Nepalese, giving them a further basis for asserting their independent national identity. A corollary of Nepal's Hindu-tribal interaction was the creation of much less rigid rules in social spheres, a relatively easy mechanism of social mobility and a relaxed inter-caste and inter-ethnic behaviour, in comparison to India. In both India and Nepal, Hindu culture has become a dominant force. But it appears that whereas the Hindu-tribal interface in India resulted in exclusion of the tribals from the orthodox Hindu fold, in Nepal the parallel confrontation between groups has tended more toward inclusion and interrelation.

The notion of blood purity and pure patrilineal descent among Hindus is strongly rooted in their belief system (Bennett: 1977: 227-33). This notion has been expressed in the great concern shown for the birth of the varnasankara in the ancient law books which was

regarded as a sign of social decay. Varnasankara are persons of hybrid births born of inter-caste marriages, and their existence created a problem of caste adjustment in India. The great numbers of sub-castes in India has in part been a result of inter-caste marriages. But these sub-castes have tended to develop into established endogamous groups and they spurn any idea of a mixed heredity in their caste. Nepal, however, never seems to have developed a multiplicity of sub-castes in spite of the fact that the incidence of inter-caste and caste-tribe marriages here has probably been the highest in Hindu South Asia. Compared to a maze of castes in India, Nepalese castes consist of fewer groups with a more clearly defined hierarchy. Many of the Chhetris, and even the Thakuris in Nepal, do not conceal the fact of their mixed descent, and their practice has not produced any fissions or endogamous sub-castes in their ranks. Just as Nepal's response to the question of varnasankara has been to ignore it altogether, its response to the question of bratya ksatriya -- i.e. the problem concerning the degraded ksatriya raised by Manu (Manusmṛti: 10: 43-45) -- has been exactly similar. The book of Manu counted the Khasas in Nepal among a class of degraded Ksatriya. But they are today fully integrated within the high Chhetri caste of Nepal.

In the past, Hinduism had established its authority through the exercise of a social and ritual primacy in Nepal. This has changed in present times as Hinduism now establishes itself through a much stronger political assertion. The legal code now in force reflects a spirit compatible with modern values. But Hinduism has entered Nepal's polity as a fundamental element of its present constitution. It has acquired a new expediency in the Nepal of today; new symbols of it are constantly being invented and the older symbols are receiving a reinforced meaning. The present administration, in the process of national integration and modernisation, promotes this new Hinduism with a far greater force and rapidity than even before. This administration seems to balance its policies carefully between the recognition of a person's individual rights to practice his traditional culture and the rejection of any group action which might make a demand for greater cultural autonomy for the group.

The national mainstream in Nepal is constituted by the Hindus and their culture to which all smaller groups have, to greater or lesser extents, striven to conform in order to have access to the nations social and economic resources. The idea of preserving the cultural heritage of these groups by according them special protection may only place them in a disadvantaged position. In any event, the Hindu-tribal relationship in Nepal finds itself standing at this crucial juncture today.

Footnotes

1. I must express my deep thanks for helpful comments on the earlier draft of this paper to Drs. Linda Stone, Lynn Bennett and Gabriel Campbell and especially to Linda Stone for her generous editorial assistance.
2. The term "tribal" may sometimes carry connotations of primitiveness and social backwardness. However, it is not in this sense that I have sought to use the term here. It has been done purely for the purpose of brevity, to collectively refer to all the cultural and linguistic groups of Nepal that anthropologists and others commonly distinguish from the parbatiya Hindu groups. Sometimes, I have alternated this term with the expression 'ethnic group', which is also used by anthropologists in Nepal to refer these groups. I made no attempt to coin a new expression to replace these terms in this short paper since I fear that it might only cause further confusion.
3. The code recognises two categories of matawalis ranked one above the other and distinguished on the basis of maintaining or loosing an important social right -- their enlistment to slavery. The higher class of matawalis were called the namasine matawali i.e. the unenslaveable matawali and the lower class were called the masine matawali or the slaveable matawali. The more prominent of the tribal groups such as the Magar, Gurung, Rai and the Limbu, who lived as agriculturists and soldiers in the army, were accorded the superior rank of the namasine matawali. The numerically smaller tribal groups were classed in the slaveable category. Before slavery was completely outlawed in Nepal in 1924 A.D., slaves had been a strong prop in the Nepalese land-based agrarian economy and slaves were recruited from the members of these tribes. There is no basis on which to judge why certain groups of matawalis were ranked in the enslaveable category in the code. Those included in it certainly fell within the more economically deprived peoples than the others.
4. Rather he suggests caste ranking is determined by patterns of food transfer and service relationships.
5. Haimendorf does not actually use the term thima in his paper, although he does discuss the concept of an impure or mixed heredity among Chhetris through the use of the expression non-jharra. For discussion of the concept of thima or thimu, see Bennett, 1977).

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Marital Patterns and Women's Economic Independence: A Study Of Kham Magar Women

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This paper is a preliminary report on the marriage patterns among the Kham-speaking Magars of Western Nepal. Unlike women in many Hindu groups in Nepal, Magar women exercise a fairly high degree of control over their own marriages. They marry later than women of most other Nepalese groups,¹ often choose their own husbands, can divorce and re-marry one or several times if discontent, and are not completely dependent upon their father's or husband's lineage if widowed. Their marriage patterns are interrelated with and influenced by their economic roles in Magar society. These women are very independent economically and engage in many non-agricultural activities to generate cash income. In this paper, I wish to describe their marital patterns and explore the interrelation between these patterns and women's economic independence. Data for this paper was collected in Thabang Panchayat as part of ongoing field research.²

The Kham-speaking Magar are an ethnic group living in the northern districts of Rolpa and Rukhum in Rapti Zone and parts of Dhaulagiri along the upper tributaries of the Sani Bheri, Barigad, and Rapti rivers. Although Magars, these people distinguish themselves from the Magar who settled mostly in the middle western hills (concentrated in Gulmi and Palpa) whose traditional language is Magarkura. The Magars discussed in this paper speak a distinct Tibeto-Burman language called Kham (meaning both the name of the language and 'speech' in Kham).³ This language has no relation to the Kham dialect of Tibetan spoken by the Khampas, a Tibetan people from the region of Tibet known as Kham. Nor do the people apparently have any relation to this Tibetan group. Because these Kham-speaking Magar do form a distinct cultural group bounded by use of the language, I will hereafter refer to them for methodological convenience as the Kham Magar to distinguish them from other Magars who do not speak Kham. Although they write their names as Magar, not Kham Magar, because of their own feeling of separateness from other Magars, I find this term useful in identifying them.

The Kham Magar are nominal Hindus with a strong shamanistic tradition. They are adapted to high altitude farming and engage in pastoralism to varying degrees. Despite some cultural and ecological differences between communities, Thabang (where most of the data for this discussion was collected) is fairly representative of the Kham Magar area. The most significant difference between Thabang and more northerly Panchayats is in the extent of sheep and goat herding. To the north, Panchayats may have sheep and goats numbering 15-18,000. In Thabang, there are no more than 8000. Formerly, there was more emphasis on herding in Thabang, but the recent decrease in available pasturage and the rising rates for grazing rights in the traditional summer and winter pastures has forced many herders to sell the bulk of their flocks. Wool and meat production and the making of a variety

of wool products is still central to the economy in Thabang but not to the extent that it is in the north. Animal husbandry is now more confined to cattle, which are used for ploughing and fertilizer production. Pig raising is another important economic activity, and almost every household in Thabang keeps one or two pigs.

During the slack agricultural seasons and leisure time women engage in a variety of income-generating activities: processing wool and local fibers, making liquor, and raising pigs for sale. They spin and weave local wool for coats and blankets, which are used in the household, sold in the village, or sold during seasonal trips to Butwal, Tansen, Ghorahi, and Bhairawa. Besides processing wool, women also prepare hemp (which grows wild or is intercropped with wheat) and puwa (a wild nettle fiber which yields a cloth slightly coarser than cotton). The raw hemp is sold or traded for salt. Women also make grain sacks from both hemp and puwa and sell them. In addition, some women bring cotton thread up from the Tarai Bazaars and weave it into cloth for local sale.

Liquor is an important part of the Magar diet and is used in the whole range of pujas (worship ceremonies), life cycle rites, and festivals. Many women, especially unmarried and widowed women, sell liquor within the village for these and other occasions and also at local fairs (locally, ram; Nepali, mela) which are held throughout the year in nearby villages.

Kham Magars are divided into four northern Magar sub-tribes (thars):⁴ Pun, Roka, Gharti, and Buda. In addition, in Thabang, there is a thar called Jhankri.⁵ These thars are subdivided into named localized lineages, each of which has a common mythical ancestor or a common place of origin. These localized lineages rather than the thars form the effective exogamous unit.

Magar communities are generally very dense. The typical settlement is a large village cluster above the river valley with smaller hamlets nearby forming a single cultural entity. The people in the village own land scattered throughout the valley at varying altitudes. An individual's land holdings may be separated by a four or five hour walk. In Thabang, the village is typically large — 430 households out of a total of 600 in the entire Panchayat. Marriage usually takes place within the region bounded by the community's farmlands; only seldom does a bride come from a distant Panchayat. Although informants claim that thars are the exogamous unit, data on actual marriage exchanges indicates that marriages often take place between members of the same thar. The localized lineages seem to be the true exogamous units within Kham Magar society. In Thabang, these lineages include:

<u>Pun</u>	<u>Roka</u>	<u>Buda</u>	<u>Gharti</u>	<u>Jhankri</u>
Dharlamf	Rumkami	Rumkami	Sutpaharai	
Ulunga	Rumjali	Rumjali	Paharai	
Ledda	Danunge	Baijali	Marke	
	Jeibangi	Haimali	Rumjali	
		Khala	Harimange	

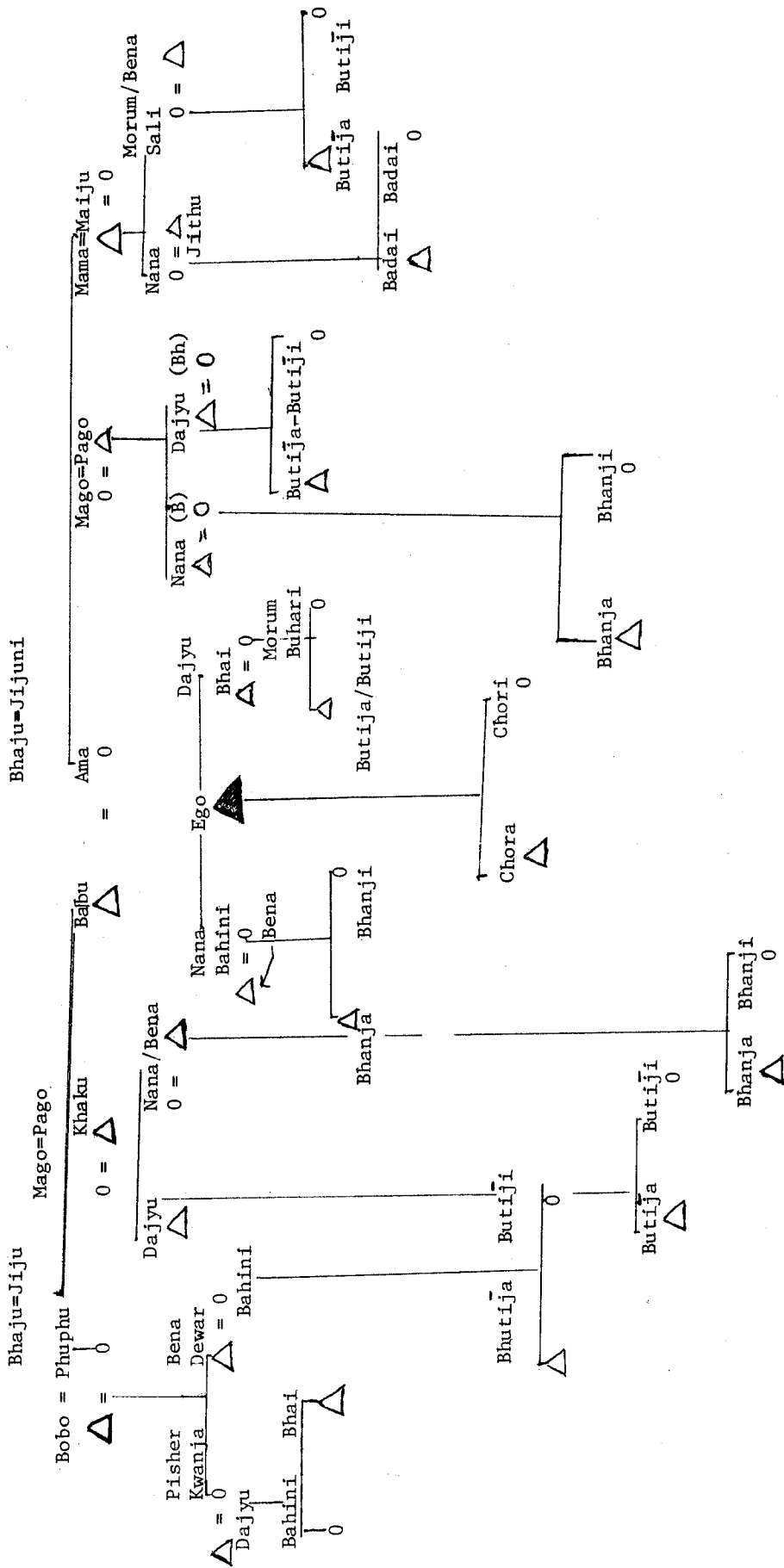
Marriages, then, are permitted within a thar (i.e. a Buda can marry another Buda), but not within a localized lineage group (i.e. a Baijali Buda cannot marry another Baijali Buda). Because of the preference to marry within the local area, most of the lineages have bride-giving (maiti)/bride-taking (bhanja) relationships to all other lineages within Thabang. Recently, marriages have been contracted between members of large lineages. These families justified the marriage because there was no living relative or remembered ancestor common to both families. Although some people in Thabang condemn such marriage practise, it is becoming more acceptable. To the north, especially in Taka, where these lineages are quite large, marriage within the lineage group is quite common. There the rule is stated that no marriages are permitted within 14 generations. The first marriage contracted between two lineages (daju-bhai)⁶ within a localized lineage group is referred to as 'breaking the bones', a conception based on the belief common to many groups in Nepal that males contribute the bones and structural parts of the body while females the flesh and soft parts of the body.

In Thabang, the people themselves explain the marriage rule as preferred matrilineal cross-cousin marriage with the stipulation that one cannot marry into a lineage whose women are classificatory sister's children (bhanji). (Refer to kinship chart). If one translates this into bride-giving/bride-taking relationships, the rule forbids the reversal of existing relationships; a lineage cannot take a bride from a lineage to which it has traditionally given brides or vice versa. The reason seems to be that this would confuse the existing status ties of rights and obligations created by prior marriage exchanges.⁷

Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is common among the Magar. Marriages between matrilateral cross-cousins were once arranged while the couple were both still children although this is no longer standard practise. Kinship terms bear out the originally heavy stress on this marriage rule; a man addresses his wife's parents as mama-maiju (MB and MBW, consistent with Nepali) whether his wife is his actual cross-cousin or not. His wife addresses his parents as Phuphu-Bobo (FZ and FZH; bobo is particularly a Kham kin term). The term for mother's brother's daughter is also indicative of this preference; she is called sali, a term usually meaning wife's younger sister in Nepali. In Thabang, it refers to these two and to younger brother's wife.

Although a few marriages are still arranged, it has become more common for children to choose their own spouses. However, the tight web of bride-giving/bride-taking relationships and the use of classificatory kin terms greatly limit the choice of marriage partners. All members of the village are addressed by kin terms, both actual and classificatory. Thus flirtation or marriage is permitted only with those women whom a man calls sali. The two most recent marriages witnessed in the village were both with actual matrilateral cross-cousins, although the individuals themselves chose to marry and one couple did so secretly without their parents' knowledge.

KINSHIP CHART - KHAM MAGARS



This pattern of marriage between matrilateral cross-cousins is not so strong as before, however, due to an increased contact with marriageable partners from other villages. Numerous fairs are held throughout the year in various surrounding Panchayats. It is becoming more popular for local teenagers to attend these fairs, and it is there that they come into contact with unmarried people from other Magar villages. Girls go to sell liquor and pork and they flirt freely with their customers since there is no parental supervision. Although this considerably widens their choice of partners, most girls still marry within their own communities so they will be close to their maiti (natal home). However, there does seem to be a trend toward marriages between people from more distant Panchayats.

In the northern villages, marriageable girls are openly permitted to have sexual relations with potential marriage partners in community houses where teenagers gather to sing and dance in the evenings. In the more southern villages, such as Thabang, however, sexual activity is more restricted. Although young people gather to sing and dance at night, premarital sexual relations are not publicly condoned and they attempt to keep them secret when they do occur. Such relationships may lead to marriage, especially if a girl becomes pregnant. If the couple choose not to marry, several courses are open to the girl. She can request some compensation from the boy, which is usually given upon formal request before the Pradhan Panch. It is more likely that she will try to hide the fact that she is pregnant, however, and rely upon local abortion measures or infanticide. Statistics on abortion and infanticide are hard to gather, but female informants report that both are options for young women who do not wish either to marry or raise an illegitimate child.

Magar society is patrilineal. Traditionally, a woman cannot inherit, although villagers now follow the Nepalese national law which entitles an unmarried daughter over 35 years of age to a share of her father's ancestral property. Men without sons or close lineage brothers may pass their property on to daughters by local customary law. One young woman inherited her Father's estate at his death as there were no close male relatives to inherit. Her sister divorced her husband to come and live on the estate because she had no children. Both are now quite well-off. They make enough cash by selling blankets and by selling liquor and meat regularly to pay hired labourers to do most of the agricultural work on their land. They are even able to dress more stylishly than their neighbours. Other women are very ambivalent toward these two sisters. To some women they are socially reprehensible and certainly witches; to others they are lucky and to be respected for living so well and so independently of men.

Residence patterns may be either patrilocal or neolocal. Elder brothers generally set up separate households with their share of the property within a few years after marriage, while the youngest brother stays with his parents and inherits the house. This pattern gives wives of older brothers considerable independence. Indeed, it is

usually the wife who initiates the break from her husband's parents. This can cause conflict between the father-in-law and the bride. The father-in-law is reluctant to divide up his estate to satisfy what he sees as the whim of his son's new wife.

Despite the variety of choices open to women, the majority of marriages are monogamous and the majority of women do not divorce. Most women marry once and remain in their husband's household for the rest of their life. If they are widowed after bearing male children, they remain with their youngest son and his family, supported by his share of the property.

This is the ideal, and women who live differently usually wish they did not have to do so, although this opinion is by no means universal. If the ideal course is not open to a woman for reasons discussed in what follows, or if she is unhappy with her married position, a variety of courses are open to her.

Polygamy

Marriages may be polygamous as well as monogamous. Polygamy is an old custom apparently practised for several reasons. The first is male prestige. It is common for a fairly wealthy villager or a returned soldier to take a second or third wife as a way of expressing his social status (and manhood). Men with several wives are quite proud of this fact and this is often the subject of much joking and boasting. The second reason is labour shortage. Women do most of the agricultural labour, except for ploughing. In addition, they collect firewood and carry water, both of which are crucial and time-consuming activities.

The sheep and goat herders in Thabang are migratory. Most men must take their animals north in the summer months to Taka-Bachhi, Hukam and Maikot Panchayats (four months - mid-June to mid-September).⁸ In the winter, they go south to Kata in Dang. Cattle are kept in gots near the village during post-harvest season and the winter months. During the summer months, they are kept in gots in the high pasture near or in the forests. Wealthier families hire herders for this purpose or send a male member of the household up to the got for an extended period. If there are several men in the household, they may alternate for a few weeks at a time. Women usually remain in the village and perform most of the agricultural labour. In addition, during the spring season until the potato crop is harvested, the women must carry grain supplies periodically up to the gots. After the potato crop is ripe, herders live mainly on milk products and potatoes with occasional supplements of grain, brought infrequently by women in the household. Thus, a household with herds of sheep or goats needs women to do all the work in the village as well as to make periodic trips to the gots with food supplies.

Men with considerable land holdings prefer to marry another wife rather than depend on hired labour. In addition, those villagers who have sheep and goats need someone to weave and prepare wool. Although both men and women spin wool, women generally do the carding, washing and fluffing of the fiber and they do all of the weaving of woollen cloth. As mentioned above, women also make cloth from hemp and puwa, which is a time-consuming and exclusively female task. Families may 'borrow' a female relative to help in these and agricultural activities; a richer man may decide to take a second wife.

The third and most common reason for polygamy is the first wife's failure to produce a son. The mortality rate is very high among the Magars, and almost half the children die before adulthood.⁹ The desire for male progeny is high, as only male children carry the line and only sons can properly perform the death rites that insure their father's passage to the realm of the ancestors. A man without a male child will often take a second wife, even if he is not financially well-off. Since informants claim that sisters are more apt to get along well as co-wives, there is a preference for a man to take his wife's sister as a second wife.¹⁰

The second (or third) wife is subordinate to the first in status. It is generally the elder wife who makes decisions about household work patterns, household expenditures, etc. As would be expected, polygamous marriages can set up considerable conflict between wives, especially between a woman who has no sons and a young pretty wife, who usurps her place and whose children will inherit her husband's property. A man's decision to take another wife generally leads to great disputes with the first wife, although she is generally powerless to prevent the marriage.¹¹ She may refuse to live with the new wife or vice versa and the husband may be forced to build his new wife a separate house. If he is the youngest or only son, he may move in with his new wife and leave his eldest wife with his parents. He is required by customary law to maintain both his wives, although favourite wives often manage to divert a major part of his income to their household.

Polygamy does not always result in conflict between wives. The older woman may indeed welcome a younger wife who can share the workload. If the first wife is old and past childbearing age, there will not be a conflict unless she has children of her own whose exclusive rights to the property can be usurped if the new wife bears children to her new husband. However, all children inherit equally, regardless of the seniority of their mother. Women with only female children (who could inherit if there are no male children) will be threatened by a rival who may well bear a son.

Marital Age

The age of women at marriage varies considerably. The normal range is between 15 and 25 for a woman but most women marry later.¹² The pattern of later marriage can be attributed to several factors.

First is the lack of concern about the sexual purity of a bride. As mentioned earlier, premarital relationships are not severely condemned although not publicly condoned. Hence, there is no pressure to marry one's daughter before or soon after puberty. Secondly, marriage usually entails the transfer of a considerable amount of gold and copper goods with the bride as insurance for the future. Because of the time it takes to accumulate this capital, marriages are relatively late. Because the elder sons usually set up their own households within a few years of marriage, marriages are generally not arranged for them until the family can afford to split up the estate. Another reason is that couples who choose their own partners tend to marry later into their teens and early twenties when they are relatively mature.¹³ Young women also have a chance to earn considerable personal wealth while in their father's house through the sale of liquor and wool goods. The initial capital and grain to make liquor is provided by the family and the girl is entitled to all of the profits. Although she is expected to use part of her profits to buy some luxury goods and luxury food, such as meat, for family consumption, most of the money is her own to be taken with her at marriage. She invests increasingly in her own grain supplies for liquor but the household continues to give her a certain amount of their own grain as well. A young teenage girl will thus seldom marry before she has had a chance to generate cash for clothing and jewelry and a few trips to a distant Bazaar. This has an effect on young men's marriage preferences as well. A young man usually prefers to marry a girl who has accumulated a certain amount of cash and jewelry as she brings this into his household at marriage.

Despite the factors mitigating against early marriage, the marriage age in Thabang seems to be decreasing. Part of the reason for this may be that arranged marriages are decreasing. Love marriages usually are performed with a minimal ceremony and at minimal expense. The families of a couple who wish to marry when relatively young can afford the ceremony earlier. Many older women attribute the slightly decreasing age to the fact that formerly unmarried daughters did not have to work very hard. Increased labour shortage and economic pressure has changed this. Women nowadays work as hard before marriage as they do after.¹⁴

If they have brothers to inherit the estate, women tend to marry soon after their parents die. Brothers are usually less lenient with their sisters than their own parents were. They usually pressure the sister to work harder for the family as she is absorbing part of the income. The brother's wife usually resents the sister as well and may pressure her to work harder even if the brother is lenient. Usually, a girl in this position either marries or goes to live with a widowed relative, who will welcome the extra labour. One young girl was living with her youngest brother after her parents died. Soon after her elder brother died, leaving a widow and a four-year-old son, the girl moved in with the widow to provide extra labour and obtain some freedom from her brother. Her marriage expenses are still the responsibility of her brother, but all other expenses are provided by

her sister-in-law. Both women are entrepreneurs, attending all the local fairs and selling food and liquor and raising pigs for sale.

Divorce

Divorce is common in Magar society. A young girl may marry two or three times before she chooses the husband she will remain with. The reasons given for divorce are: not getting along with her husband, not getting along with her mother-in-law, or falling in love with someone else. A woman obtains an informal divorce by either returning permanently to her maiti (natal home) or by running off with another man (jari). If she runs off with another man, her husband will call her lineage members together and demand that they return the girl. The couple will be brought before the Pradhan Panch and the lover sued for compensation by the husband. The first time, a woman runs off, the standard customary fee is about 1000 Rs.; the second time, 500 Rs.; the third time, half again, but this is hard to claim. If the girl returns to her maiti, she may also be sued for compensation, but often in this case she must pay it herself - her family will not always give her the money.

One young girl, whose parents died and who was living with her brother, ran off twice and had to pay compensation each time from her own money. The first time, the cost was 900 Rs. She paid half, borrowed 300 Rs. to pay part of the rest and finally gave the lineage a goat to supply the rest. The second time, she paid 450 Rs. from money she earned selling liquor at fairs.

A woman seldom divorces after the birth of a child.¹⁵ Perhaps, this is because of her higher status in her husband's house vis-a-vis the child. If she does divorce, the male children automatically go to her husband. Female children generally go with her if they are very small. In one case, a woman divorced her husband due to incompatibility and took her small daughter with her. Five years later, her former husband's elder sister kidnapped the child from a field near the house of her new husband, a day's walk from the village. The child was raised in the ex-husband's house for the next eight years. When the child was 13, the woman returned to claim her daughter but was unsuccessful. At present, the husband is offering to pay his ex-wife gold for the child, but no decision has been reached.

Widowhood

Widows in Magar society are not subject to the social degradation and economic dependency faced by higher caste Hindu women. If a young widow has male children, she will keep her husband's house and property and borrow bullocks for ploughing from her husband's lineage brothers, supplying them meals occasionally. If she has no male children, but only a female child, his lineage members often give her a tijara, or half of her husband's property. This she can use while alive, but the property reverts to his brothers at her death. Her funeral expenses

must be borne from her own income. This tijara gives some widows considerable independence.

A widow can become an entrepreneur and earn a sizable amount. If she has only young children, she may ask a female relative to move in with her to share the work. One widow had one daughter and wished to leave the girl some security. The widow earned enough cash from the sale of her gold, blankets, pigs and liquor to buy the house and some of her tijara land to give the property to her daughter at her death. Widows may remarry with little social condemnation. Although a widow is usually condemned for open flirtation and for attending fairs to sell liquor, there is little talk after she remarries.

There is a religious stigma to widowhood, which is reflected in the inferior ritual purity of the widow. A widow is traditionally brought in to clean a house of death pollution because any other woman who performed this task would cause the death of her husband. Widows are also quickly suspected of witchcraft.

Many men from the area have traditionally been recruited into the British Gorkha and Indian armies. Often their wives are sole claimants on pensions if these men die in service or after their return. Widows may thus have the advantage of a pension in addition to tijara.

Case Histories

As the marriage patterns are quite variant it is useful to present some examples of a few marriages in the area.

1. Ram is a wealthy man who owns land in the Terai bought with cash from selling his sheep herd. When his first wife had no children, he married her younger sister, but she also has had no children. Both get along well and live in the same house. The elder wife makes most decisions concerning labour division, household expenditures, etc. The younger girl makes most of the meals and carries most of the water, although both share equally in agricultural tasks.
2. Bal Man is a shepherd who has been married five times. His first wife divorced him due to tension with his mother and left him one male child. He remarried but the second wife died of an illness, and because he had no male children from this marriage, he took a third wife. The third wife was also barren so he married again, setting the third wife up in her own house near the village. The fourth wife had a daughter, but no sons, so recently, he married a young girl who lives with him and his fourth wife and their daughter. The last wife has given birth to a son. The youngest wife is the same age as his daughter and they often work together.

3. Basanta is a forty-five year old Magar who comes from a wealthy family. He married at nineteen and his first wife gave birth to a daughter. A few years later they set up a separate house. He soon fell in love with a younger girl and married her. She refused to live with his first wife and made him build her a house soon after the birth of her first son. He moved in with this wife and left his first house to the first wife. The younger convinced him to stop visiting the elder wife. After the birth of two daughters, he fell in love with another girl and married her. The third wife lived with the second and each gave birth to a son about the same time. They nursed each other's children and seemed to get along fairly well. A conflict ensued between them, however, and the second wife convinced Basanta to send the third wife back to her maiti. He still visits this younger wife occasionally, but clearly, the second wife has control of his affections. The first wife gets no income from her husband at all. The third wife gets a meager share plus occasional presents, while the second wife and her children run the household, manage their land and reap most of the benefits from his various entrepreneurial ventures which have included a small store and sale of hashish and medicinal herbs.
4. Krishna Bahadur has three wives. They all have separate houses. At first, the original two wives lived together, but after their eldest sons reached the age of about ten, they separated and the second wife moved into her maternal uncle's house in the bottom floor. The first wife has four children, two sons and two daughters, and the second wife one son. Krishna stays mainly with the third wife, and she is clearly the favourite. As he is the only surviving son his first wife lives with his father on a pension from his brother who died in service in the Indian army. She has a small share of the property. He keeps contact with all three wives, however, and can often be seen combing his second wife's hair or sitting on the front steps with his first wife and his father. Both of the first wives are extremely jealous of his newest wife and often work together in the first wife's courtyard discussing her and complaining of the injustice their husband has done by giving most of his income to his favourite wife and her children.
5. Suki is 24 and has been married twice. She ran off with her first husband, but two months later divorced him, paying 900 rupees in compensation from her own money. She returned home but after her parents died ran off again, only to divorce four months later. Her second husband demanded 500 rupees which she paid, again from her earnings from selling liquor and blankets. She returned to live with a married sister, as she did not get along with her brother. She was unhappy there, however, so she moved in with Basanta's second wife, (see case 3), her mother's sister's child, to help share the work load after the third wife moved to her maiti. She claims, she will never remarry but regularly attends fairs to earn money and flirt with eligible men.

6. Ram Pura is 45 years old and was Bal Man's first wife. After she returned to her maiti, she married a veteran and since has had another son and two daughters. Her first son is away in India but stays both with her and Bal Man when he comes home on visits.
7. Mon Pura is about 50. She was married to Ram Bahadur as his second wife when about 23, but had no children. His first wife died leaving him a son and a daughter. Ram Bahadur died leaving her in charge of the property. The son went to India as a soldier and died there. The daughter went with a husband to work in India, but returned at her brother's death to claim his pension. Mora Pura remarried three years after her husband's death and had a son and daughter by this marriage. When her new husband gambled away all his property and tried to claim her gold, given to her by her maiti at marriage, she separated from him. He went to the Terai with a new wife to start a hotel. Mon Pura bought back some of his property and his house with her gold and various earnings from selling liquor and weaving. She has sent both her children to high school with borrowed money. Her brother now does ploughing for her and heavy labour and she often goes to work with her sister and brother-in-law in exchange for meals and some grain.
8. Shanti is a widow who was married twice as a teenager, for a few months at a time. She has one daughter. She acquired tijara from her third husband when he died and brought her husband's sister's daughter to live with her after the girl's mother died and her father remarried. Recently, the girl married her cousin and moved out. Shanti then married a returned soldier as his third wife. Before this marriage, however, she bought half of the tijara, (house and some land) to insure her young daughter's future.
9. Jamuna is the daughter of a widow who has been divorced three times. The first two marriages as a teenager were unsuccessful, and as she had no children she returned to her maiti. Her reason for these marriages seems to be that, after her mother died, she was forced to do most of the household work. During the last marriage, she gave birth to a daughter, but the child died after seven months. Her sasural (husband's parents) accused her of adultery while her husband was away in India in army service and after a long dispute with them, they wrote her husband convincing him to divorce her. She returned to her maiti to live with her widowed father and his son and buhari (daughter-in-law). She sued the soldier for compensation in court and won. He has now eloped with another village girl and run off with her to India.

Conclusion

A Kham Magar woman has many options for marriage. Although she cannot inherit from her father ordinarily, she can acquire considerable income from entrepreneurial activities before and after marriage. As

a young bride, she is not powerless as is the case with many Hindu groups, for she always has the option of divorce if she is unhappy with her husband. If she does not get along with his parents she can pressure her husband to set up a separate household or return to her maiti if he refuses.

Sons may insure a woman a secure position in her husband's lineage and/or household after marriage, but this is not always true. A woman's husband may easily take another wife, and if this wife has male children, they compete with her own children for a share of her husband's property. A Magar woman may thus find it necessary to take advantage of her other options. Her entrepreneurial activities give her considerable independence and even if widowed or replaced by a new wife, she usually has her own house and some property to support herself and her children.

Most marriages, however, are monogamous¹⁶ and the majority of women marry only once and remain married throughout their life. Although most women acquire their social position vis-a-vis their husband and their children, there are always other strategies for a woman who does not have this security.

Marriage patterns have an important interrelation with economic roles and status in Kham Magar society. Women engage in numerous entrepreneurial activities and generate a sizable amount of income before marriage which provides them some insurance after marriage. During marriage, these activities are an important source of family income. Widowed or divorced women rely upon these activities to maintain their independence in a strongly patrilineal society. Without this economic independence, women could not choose to live independently of husbands or fathers.

There is definitely a close relation between women's marital patterns and their economic independence. To what extent each of these factors is causal, however, is an open question. What is important is that these two factors do reinforce one another. In taking the options of divorce and establishing an independent household, women extend their own independence and make it possible for other women who wish to become independent of male relatives to move in with them. Their economic independence in turn makes it possible for them to choose between a variety of strategies. Further investigation of the Magar and other groups is needed to further examine this interrelation.

Footnotes

1. The national mean age for marriage is 16.8 for women.
2. The data for this paper was collected as part of on-going research for a Ph.D. on the Kham Magar. Research is being conducted under the auspices of CNAS at Tribhuvan University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I am grateful to these institutions for their support and guidance and to Dr. Lynn Bennett for her exchange of ideas which helped in the formulation of this paper.

3. For a more complete discussion of the Kham language see David and Nancy Watters, A Kham-English/English-Kham Dictionary, Tribhuvan University Press, Kathmandu, 1973.
4. The divisions Pun, Roka, etc. are called thar in Kham. This term in Nepali is the final division of a group defining marriage exogamy. For these Magar this use of thar is thus very confusing. Pun and Roka are more closely a sub-tribe and the unit important in marriage is what I have called localized lineage. I use "Localized lineage" rather than thar or the term "clan". Both of these are not congruent with Magar organization either conceptually or linguistically for this subdivision. There is no local term other than thar for either division, and thar more commonly refers to what I have termed sub-tribe. Conceptually localized lineage is the most accurate approximation of the subdivision within Pun, Roka, etc.
5. The relation of this thar to the others is somewhat confusing. According to Jhankri informants, the original shaman (jhankri) was the product of an incestuous union between a Roka brother and sister. His descendants are the Jhankri thar. In Thabang, the majority of shamans are of this thar, but to the north most shamans are of the Buda thar. It is possible that this was a localized lineage of Rokas, who assumed this name after migrating to the area because of the prestige that accrues to claiming descent from the first shaman.
6. The daju-bhai are the members of a lineage who share common ancestor spirits (pittar). The pittar of any household include males up to the great-grand-father of the sons alive in the household. Thus no marriages could take place even within a large lineage in less than 5 generations.
7. The bride-giving/bride-taking relationship carries with it important rights and obligations. The bride-givers are of higher status than bride-takers and usually request work from the bride-takers for weddings and funerals. In addition, the bride-givers can ask for and expect a certain amount of labour from the son-in-law. Reversal of the status relationship would create social and ritual problems.
8. This is now very expensive. Individual farmers charge herders 1 Rs. per adult sheep or goat and Panchayats an additional . 50 Rs. per head in the northern and summer pastures.
9. In a sample survey conducted in Thabang 47% of the 160 children born died before adulthood.
10. In the survey conducted of marriages, there were three instances of this in the main village.

11. Women are becoming increasingly aware of their legal rights and one wife with male children prevented her husband from taking another wife by threatening to go to court. If she had not been supported by her mother-in-law, however, she would have had little recourse but to accept a co-wife. (Mothers-in-law seldom take the side of their daughters-in-law). Her husband can threaten her with divorce and the need to find a new economic base. If a man wishes his wife to sign a statement of manjur (permission) she seldom has the option to refuse.
12. In a sample of 47 married women of all ages, the average age at marriage was 19.1. Of the 25 women over 35, average age was 20.2. The average age for the 27 women under 35 was 18.
13. See Mc Farlane, Alan, Resources and Population: A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976), p. 223.
14. At present, I do not have enough data to support or refute this claim.
15. See Rex and Shirley Jones, "Limbu Women and the Divorce Cycle," Kailash, 1976, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 169-84.
16. In a sample survey, I conducted, out of 73 recorded marriages involving 60 women: 9 were polygamous, (15%), and 13 ended in divorce, (21%).



Sitting in a Cave: An analysis of ritual seclusion at minarche among Brahmans and Chhetris in Nepal

Lynn Bennett

Guphā basne (literally, "sitting in a cave") is a rite of passage among Brahmans and Chhetris of Nepal that marks the transition of a girl at menarche from a presexual to a sexual being. My study of these rites in the small Brahman-Chhetri settlement of Narikotl revealed a feature of the guphā basne rituals that appears curious on first sight: In these rites there is a clear ritual focus on the girl's consanguineal male relatives. First, it is from these males that the girl must maintain the utmost distance and seclusion. Thus if her menarche occurs while she is at her māitā (parent's house) the guphā basne rituals are more elaborate, and the duration and degree of her seclusion are greater, than if she is married and settled in her ghar (husband's house). In addition, it is a senior consanguineal male (father or elder brother) who must present the girl with the essential ritual gift of saubhāgya sāmān following her seclusion. This gift consists, in part, of red bangles and beads that in other contexts of Brahman-Chhetri culture serve as symbols of a woman's married status and therefore of her legitimate fertility. Although an unmarried girl can wear these items, a widow cannot (her period of legitimate fertility being over); in fact she cannot wear the colour red at all.

As with most societies, menarche among Brahmans and Chhetris is very closely associated with the beginning of a girl's fertility. But among the strongly patrilineal Brahman-Chhetris, it is the husband's group, the ghar, that is most concerned with and, in turn, threatened by, the sexuality and fertility of its incoming brides. Why, then, is it a girl's consanguineal male relatives who are so strongly involved in the guphā basne rituals, and why, if a girl is already married, do her affinal male relatives play such a minor, almost neutral, role? This involvement of consanguineal males in guphā basne is also curious given that in many other cultural contexts the sexual and fertility aspects of one's daughters and sisters is antithetical to their otherwise perpetually sacred and pure status vis a vis their consanguineal male relatives.

Here I offer an analysis of the Brahman-Chhetri guphā basne that seeks to explain this somewhat puzzling aspect of the rituals. I will suggest that the role of the consanguineal male relatives can be understood by examining the complex and contrasting sets of social and religious roles that a woman assumes in her māitā, or natal home, and in her ghar, or husband's house. In the former, she carries a high sacred status; in the latter she is decidedly of low ritual and social status. The incoming wife, though welcome both for the labour, she will provide and the offspring she will bear for her husband's patriline, is also seen as threatening, and is surrounded by an aura of danger. Yet a woman also plays a role of linking her māitā with her ghar and, as such, she is the focal point for those important affinal relationships that her marriage establishes between two patrilineages. It is by examining this interstitial, linking position of women that the ambiguities of female sexuality and fertility, as expressed in the guphā basne rituals, can be most clearly understood.

The Rituals

Among orthodox hill Brahmins--and to a lesser extent among the Chhetris--every effort is made to get daughters married before their menarche. This is, in fact, implied by the term kanyādān which is used for the orthodox, meritorious form of marriage. While kanyā means generally "maiden" or "virgin", it is also used specifically to denote pre-pubescent girl. Kanyā keti, or pre-pubescent unmarried girls, are considered especially pure, or chokho, and many rituals require the worship of a given number of kanyā as incarnations of the goddess Durga.²

Since students of Brahmin-Chhetri society are already familiar with the general suspicion of affinal women and the heavy stress placed on maintaining their purity (see Bennett, 1976), there is nothing surprising in the fact that the "guaranteed purity"--and the greater emotional malleability--of pre-pubescent girls should make them preferred as brides. Yet, in the span of one generation, the village of Narikot has undergone a basic change in this regard. More and more families are preferring the prestige of an educated bride (even though she may get little chance to use her education in her husband's home) over the "guaranteed purity" of a pre-pubescent one. In turn, more and more girls are being sent to school (some to eight and even tenth class) rather than being married off.

A survey³ in Narikot revealed that of the twenty-five women aged 35 and over, the average age of marriage was 13. Among the twenty-two married women in the under-35 age group, the average marriage age was 17. Since the average age of menarche for this sample was 15.4, the shift is clearly away from the ideal of the pre-pubescent bride.

Even before this recent change, however, many girls--especially among the Chhetris--reached menarche before marriage. For these unmarried girls the guphā basne ceremony has always been, and continues to be, much more strict than it is for girls who have their first period after they are safely married and living in their ghar or husband's household. The most important feature of the ceremony is the seclusion of the girl in a dark room where absolutely no light is allowed to enter. This is the guphā or "cave" which gives the ritual its name. If the girl is already married, the guphā may be in the attic or cattle shed of her own ghar (husband's house). But if she is still unmarried and living in her māitā, she must be immediately taken to another house--preferably that of an old, high-caste widow in some other village--but it must definitely be far enough away from the girl's māitā so that she cannot possibly catch sight of the roof of her own home.

The main reason for whisking the unmarried girl away from her māitā is the very strict prohibition on "seeing the face" of either her father or her brothers during her first menstruation. "Ba ko mukh ra daju-bhai ko mukh hernu hundaina." She should not even hear their

voices; nor should they hear hers. If possible, the sight of all men is avoided. As soon as the girl discovers her condition and announces it to her mother or elder sister, she is covered with a big shawl so that neither males nor Surya,⁴ the sun deity, may see her. Then she is bundled off by the back way to some appropriate place of seclusion. She must stay concealed there for either twelve or twenty-two days.⁵ If she is already married and in her ghar, the period of seclusion may be even shorter than twelve days. And in one case, I observed in Narikot the guphā basne of a married girl lasted only four days (the length of normal menstrual seclusion) and was done in her husband's family's own animal shed. There was some criticism of this laxity, but the general feeling was that, since she was married, the ritual was not so important.

For the first four days, the girl may not take any salt with her food and she may have only one rice meal a day. She may not stir out of the darkened room while the sun is up and so a brass koparā is provided in the room for her bodily eliminations. After the fourth day, she may go outside early in the morning before sun rise and bathe. After that she may resume eating normal food. Except for their friends' visits, most women I interviewed remembered their guphā basne ceremony as a lonely and somewhat frightening experience, especially if they were unmarried and had been sent away to a stranger's house.

For all the women, I interviewed in depth, the guphā basne ceremony was among their most vivid and significant early memories. They all associated the sexual maturation of their bodies and the awakening of romantic and narcissistic interests indirectly with the onset of menstruation. For those who were not already married, it signaled the rapid approach of that ominous event.

With menstruation begins the taruni period of a woman's life when she is expected to be healthy, sexually attractive and desirous of admiration, despite her shyness. The word taruni means sexually mature young girl--something close to "nubile", perhaps, in English. But to get a better understanding of the Nepali concept and how it realates to menarche, I will quote one informant's memories of her guphā basne

When one becomes na-chhune [menstruous] then the taruni period begins. During this time [i.e. during menstruation] you are not supposed to touch the children⁶ and then you become a taruni. A lot of blood accumulates and so this blood comes out. The breasts grow. First, they are small--about this big. After the first menstruation, they begin to grow bigger. And you begin to feel that if you could wear pretty clothes and do make-up then you would become pretty too. When you are small you have no desires for that sort of thing. If you get something to eat, then that is enough for you when you are small. But when you grow up, then you want good food and good things to wear. You feel that you would like to be better than all the others--to put on a lot of make-up, cream,

powder and kajal (eye make-up) -- to become a taruni. You think about what others will say--whether they will say you are a taruni or not and whether they will say you are pretty or not. These are the new feelings that you have when you are a taruni.

I was fourteen for my guphā basne. Mother was at the spring washing clothes. ... I had taken rice to the dhiki to pound it to make parched rice for my friend's wedding. After pounding four mānā, I took it from the dhiki and went. On the way, I felt like urinating. So I put the rice aside and squatted down--but as I was urinating, I felt something cold. When I looked to see what had happened, I saw something red. And something black like the excrement of insects. I thought that there had been some insect excrement under that tree. Then when I had gone a little way, I began to think: Maybe this is what they call na chhune [menstruation], ... I didn't know anything about all that. A few days earlier there had been pains. ... Now there were red marks on my dhoti. I didn't know whether I had become na chhune or not. I left the rice right there. I didn't touch the rice. I called out to mother and told her I didn't know but may be I had become na chhune. And then I began to weep. Now I had to stay in the guphā. I would not be able to look upon anyone. I would have to stay all alone. And mother also began to weep.

"Now my daughter has grown up. She will become bigger day by day, and she will have to be married off to another person's house."

Mother also wept at the thought that she would be all alone and she would have to do everything in the house by herself ...

When you become na chhune, then you feel embarrassed with your father. They begin to think about where to hide you and in whose house you should stay.

Mother said that I would have to be taken to the house of a Jaisi on the ridge above our house. When one becomes na chhune, then if a boksi [witch] sees one then evil will befall one. One becomes ill. If the boksi sees the blood or the person taking a bath, then she casts the evil eye upon that person. We would become barren. The boksi ruins the womb and that is why one has to be kept at a place where there are no boksi. The first time [one menstruates] one can come to harm.⁷

Moreover, a female child will do unseemly things because she doesn't know what it is all about. Grandmother scolded and said that a mere child might go around and show her bleeding. And so I went away. ... I was not supposed to look upon the sun. Nor are you supposed to look at the road straight ahead. So I went with my head bowed and the dhai āmā [wet nurse/servant] put a shawl over my head. My cousin who had already been married was home in her māitā for a visit at the time and she came along and teased me.

"Oh, Ambika has become na chhune? It is time to gether married. She has become a taruni." She teased me all along. She took me to that Jaisi woman who had a deaf-mute daughter. And that lāti [female deaf-mute], who simply used to say "Wah wah", teased me [in sign language]. She made a penis like a man's.

"Your father will play the bājā--piti, piti, piti, piti [onomatopoeic sound of drums accompanied by drumming gestures with the forefingers--a common deaf-mute expression for sexual intercourse after the wedding]! He will play the bājā and send you away and your husband will do it to you!" She kept on at it. That lāti! I felt so angry. I scolded her and told her to drop dead. But what to say to a lāti like that? So I wept and stayed there. ...

At that time, you are not supposed to eat salt for four days--that is the custom this side. But they gave it to me. They cooked rice and curry and put salt into it. Then I made my bed and slept. ... I used to sleep through the whole day. Even a small hole which would let the sunlight in would have to be covered up. On the fourth day, I bathed once. I would get up early in the morning at about 3-4 o'clock. That old woman used to take me to the place where I was to bathe. ... When the sun set, then I would come out and go to the bathroom in the fields. During the day, I would do it in a koparā and throw it away.

And then on the twelfth day, I took a bath during the day and prayed to Surya Narayan. After the twelfth day you are permitted to look upon the sun. ... On the fifteenth day, I washed my hair and took a bath and returned home. My brother tossed out my new dhōtī and blouse to me and I put them on. And then father performed the pujā for Surya Narayan⁸ and put tikā on me and gave me money and then he looked at my face [mukh herne]. You are not supposed to look on your father's face until he has put tikā so I bowed down my head and father put on the tikā without looking at my face. You

can look at your mother. But you must not look at your father or your brothers. You are not even supposed to look at the roof top of your father's house! It is so bad. If they see our face then ill-fortune [a-lachhin] will follow them. And that is why it is only when Surya Puja has been performed and only after they have given us dhago [red hair braid], sidur [vermillion], chura [bangles], red clothes⁹ and everything that they can look upon our face.

There are several variations in the rituals of purification after guphā basne. They can take place on the twelfth, the fifteenth (as in the narrative above) or the twenty-second day after menstruation. Besides doing a pujā to Surya Narayan, the girl must also make several



A Brahmin girl completing her worship of Surya (the sun deity) to mark the end of her seclusion.

godān ("gift of cow") offerings to the family priest in order to purify herself. These are done with a shawl held up between the Brahman and the girl so he does not catch sight of her face as she gives him the leaf plate of coins and they exchange tika.

But one ritual act is essential to a girl's purification: she must receive from her father and brothers a red dhoti and blouse, saubhāgya samān (red, bangles, mirror, comb, etc., that serve as signs of a married woman whose husband is still alive) and daksinā (ritual gift of money) before she can be seen by them or enter her own house again. Even if she is married, these items of clothing and decoration must be sent to her in her husband's house by consanguineal males.¹⁰

Analysis

In Brahman-Chhetri culture there is a clear parallel between the janai (sacred thread worn by males) and the saubhāgya sāmān -- the red beads and bangles that serve as signs of a married woman whose husband is alive. Both are symbols of controlled sexuality, ascetic restraint and the personal purity which the householder--both male and female, respectively--tries to maintain. The janai is first given to a male at his bartaman ceremony which initiates him into full caste and lineage status as an adult and prepares him for marriage. Girls, however, receive their red clothes and saubhāgya sāmān of initiation twice: once from a consanguineal male (her father or elder brother) at the guphā basne and once from an affinal male (her husband) at marriage. This situation--especially the receipt of saubhāgya sāmān, which is so strongly connected with marriage, from consanguineal males--at first seems not only puzzling, but even shocking in a culture where so much care is taken through gotra exogamy and various other rules to avoid the possibility of incestuous unions between any close kinsmen. In fact, if the saubhāgya gift is examined in the context of the guphā basne rite, it quite clearly signifies the exact opposite of incest: a complete transference of the daughter's nascent sexuality away from her natal group and to another patriline.

Like everything connected with female sexuality, female initiation in Brahman-Chhetri society has certain problematic aspects. For one thing, the signs of physical maturity in a female are abrupt and unmistakable. As soon as a girl has menstruated she is considered a taruni. Yet this sexual maturity which she achieves at menarche does not coincide with social and religious adulthood which she achieves only at marriage. If marriage is performed according to the Brahmanical ideal before the onset of puberty, there is no problem with the appearance of sexuality. The girl has already been transferred by her consanguineal kinsmen to her husband's patriline where she has assumed full caste and ritual status. She has already received an earlier saubhāgya sāmān from her husband and her emerging sexuality has been properly channelled and controlled. It is in this context understandable that the guphā basne ceremony of a married girl in her ghar is much less rigorous than for an unmarried girl in her māitā.

But if, as is often the case, menarche occurs before marriage, both the purity of the girl and the reputation of her māitā become extremely vulnerable. Her nascent unattached sexuality is an anomaly which endangers herself and her male consanguineal relatives. She has changed from a kanyā keti into a taruni, but she has not yet been transferred to her affinal group that will channel her sexuality toward its own legitimate continuity.

Here we have reached the crux of the strong contrast between affinal and consanguineal women in Brahman-Chhetri kinship and social organization. The sexual and procreative roles which are felt to endanger the purity of the patrilineal group are exclusively associated with affinal women. Hence the bride, so strongly identified with her

procreative role, must be protected by the strictest social means in her ghar. The daughter, on the other hand, is categorically shielded from any association with sexual roles. To her māitā a woman is always perceived as the pure, virgin kanyā. There is no need for the harsh restrictions of the husband's house because, from the point of view of her māitā, a daughter has no sexuality to be controlled. This is, in fact, the conceptual basis of the sacredness of daughters and sisters and of the high ritual status of consanguineal women: daughters and sisters can be "sacred" to their consanguineal kin only because they are not structural members of their natal patriline. Once she is married, a woman's purity does not concern her māitā; it has already been established by her acceptance into an affinal group of the appropriate ritual status.

There is, however, great concern about the purity of consanguineal females who have reached pubescence, but have not yet been transferred to another patriline. For, as the name kanyādān suggests, a girl must be pure in order to be given away as a religious gift, and until her marriage, her actions reflect directly upon the prestige of her māitā. Any "loose" behaviour on her part (and his might include such things as talking with boys on the village path, laughing too much or showing lack of proper shyness in front of men) makes her father's job of finding a suitable groom that much more difficult. For the whole village is the custodian of her reputation and the prospective groom's family will doubtless sound out her neighbours before finalizing the engagement.

In the unlikely event that she should disgrace her family by becoming pregnant, her family may be forced to expel her to save their own caste standing. There is great urgency to disclose the caste status of such an unmarried girl's lover, since this man will determine the future caste status of the girl and her child. If the gentle questioning of the girl's own family does not succeed, she is subjected to the harsh interrogation of a gathering of male lineage members. Even if the lover was a Chhetri or a Brahman, the girl's chances of marriage almost disappear unless her family can bring pressure on her lover to marry her.

But if the girl will not identify her lover, then her family must assume the worst—that the lover was lower caste or even untouchable. On the eleventh day after the birth during a ceremony called nuhāran, if no father can be produced to give his gotra and thar names to the child, both the child and the mother become untouchable.¹¹ From then on the girl may not enter her father's house and must fend for herself.¹²

By separating the girl from her consanguineal kin before the emergence of her sexuality, the Brahmanic ideal of pre-pubescent marriage not only avoids the possibility of such heartbreaking scandal, but also provides the ideological basis for the sacredness of consanguineal women and the special relaxed and affectionate treatment of daughters and sisters. The menarche of an unmarried girl presents her family with a grave threat to the categorical purity on which her

sacred status is based. Guphā basne is a ritual attempt to protect that purity by establishing a symbolic barrier between the girl's sexuality and her consanguineal male kinsmen. The girl's seclusion is, of course, meant to protect her from all men (and conversely to protect all men from her menstrual pollution), but there is a strong emphasis on avoidance of the father and brothers in particular. The fact that an unmarried girl is specifically forbidden to stay in her māitā or even "see the roof of her father's house" during this period, while married girls may undergo seclusion inside their husbands' house, further indicates that it is the girl's special relationship with her father and brother which is especially endangered by her menarche.

The father's puzzling gift of saubhāgya sāmān, instead of symbolizing (as it might at first appear to do) the māitā's sexual claim on the girl, is, on the contrary, an acknowledgement that her sexuality and fertility are transferable and, indeed, must be transferred. It is her fertility potential that serves as the basis for the marriage and the ensuing linkage between the group that gives her and the group that receives her. If she is already married, the fathers' saubhāgya sāmān gift is a ritual recognition of his responsibility to ultimately provide not a just a kanyā keti (virgin girl) but a sexual/fertile being. If the girl is unmarried, the father's saubhāgya sāmān is an acknowledgement that she has reached marriageable age and must soon be sent away. The response to menarche quoted in the earlier passage is typical: "Now your father must marry you off!" After the physical separation of her seclusion, the girl's father must present her with the signs of her imploding marriage before he can "look upon her face."

The two individual items of saubhāgya sāmān which the groom must give the bride in the marriage rituals are red marriage beads and a vermillion mark in the parting of her hair. The latter carries strong connotations of the groom's impending sexual possession of the bride. Significantly, these two items are not included in the saubhāgya gifts which the father gives at the conclusion of his daughter's guphā basne ceremony.¹³ The other items which he does give (i.e. the red clothes, bangles, hairbraid, mirror, comb, etc.) may be worn and used by both married and unmarried women (though not by widows), but only married women may wear the red marriage beads and vermillion mark in the hair.

This interpretation of guphā basne as symbolic of the necessity of separating male lineage members from the sexuality of consanguineal women is reinforced by two other such prescribed ritual separations between them. Thus, a woman may not "look upon the face" of her father and brothers for ten days after she has given birth and for a full year after the death of her husband. Both are situations, like menarche, which emphasize--though in different ways--the sexual aspect of consanguineal women. All three events are potentially dangerous "outbreaks"¹⁴ of female sexuality which can only be controlled within the patrilineal structures of kinship.

Until the nuhāran ceremony on the eleventh day after birth, when the child's father claims it as a member of his lineage, neither the child nor its mother may be seen by the mother's consanguineal male relatives. Other men may see both mother and child, but her brothers and father may not. This period of seclusion, called sutkeri or kona ma basne (lit "sitting in a corner"), is likened by villagers to the guphā basne period and would, once again, seem to shield the woman's sexuality from men of her māitā until her affines re-assert their patrilineal control and responsibilities at the nuhāran ceremony.

At childbirth a woman's sexuality is responsible for the giving of life; when her husband dies, her sexuality is associated in a vague way with the destruction of life. It seems odd, perhaps, to associate widowhood with female sexuality when among the high castes, the death of a husband signals the end of her legitimate sexual life. However, in many other realms of Brahman-Chhetri culture, we find the idea that a woman's sexual looseness, or even her sexual demands on her own husband, weakens him and may be responsible for his death. This is not to say, of course, that individual widows are actually thought to be guilty of such crimes in the minds of their fellow villagers. The sense of sin connected with widowhood is far too diffused and inarticulate in most cases to provoke any direct accusations.

Nevertheless, a widow's sexuality--like that of an unmarried pubescent girl--is a social anomaly. Since she is no longer under the control of her husband, she presents a potential problem to both her affinal and consanguineal kin. Most important, her affinal group can never make fully legitimate use of her fertility again. There is also the problem of who is responsible for supporting her. Since she was transferred at marriage to her husband's thar and gotra, her affines have an obligation to support her and her children for the rest of her life. In some families, however, this responsibility for a deceased kinsman's wife may be resented--especially if she and her children are young or, even worse, if she is childless. Thus, the period immediately following her husband's death is a time when her and her children's rights to a share of part of the patrilineal land must be established.

Before the barakhi ceremony, which marks the end of a widow's year of mourning, the māitā must send a set of clothes to their widowed daughter. For a year, she will have worn only the plain white clothes of widowhood in which her father and brothers may never see her. But after the barakhi srāddha for her husband, she can put on clothes with designs and colours (any colour but red) and go to visit her māitā. One widow informant remembered that even though her father became seriously ill and eventually died during the year of enforced separation, she was not allowed to go to visit him:

We are not supposed to go our māitā wearing white clothes. My father wept and wept when my husband died. And within six months he also died. I was not able to go to him. We couldn't meet until a year had passed. He

sat there at the pipal tree with his grandchildren and he wept his heart out and went away. He couldn't meet me or see me so he sat there and wept and went away. In those days, we didn't have paper money. But he sent coins worth twenty, twenty-five rupees to his two grandchildren. And for me, he sent a lump of misri [crystalized sugar] this big, and a coconut. And then, when six months had passed, my father also died. He told my brothers that they should give this and that to his daughter. He had made a bangle of gold and a necklace with coral and gold nuggets and told them to give it to me. But when father died, who would give that to me? No one gave it. They brought a set of clothes with designs on them because this has to be given when the māitā is putting on the tika [after the year of mourning]. They brought shoes and clothes and shawls and I put them on and went to my māitā.

The proscription against seeing her father and brothers during the year of mourning means that a woman cannot follow what is probably her natural inclination to escape to the comfort and support of her māitā. It places the responsibility for her and her children squarely on the shoulders of her affinal kin where, in terms of the patrilineal kinship structure, it belongs.

Behind the ban on seeing consanguineal men during the year of mourning is the idea that the māitā should never become the permanent home of an adult woman. Of course, women given away in kanyādān always retain the right to return to their māitā permanently if the situation in their ghar is absolutely unbearable. But, while short visits to the māitā are a cherished delight to both the woman and her consanguineal kin, prolonged or permanent stays can place severe strains on her special honoured position there and even on her normally warm and affectionate relationship with her brothers.

Just as a woman's status in her māitā is the reverse of her lowly status in her husband's home, so her behavioural standards are to a large extent the reverse of what they are in her ghar. A chhori (daughter) visiting her māitā is given the lightest, most enjoyable of the household work--cooking, doing pujā, weaving straw mats or looking after children. Here, she may complain freely to sympathetic ears about the treatment she receives from her mother-in-law or her co-wife. She will be allowed to sleep when she feels tired during the day and she will be expected to avail herself of her mother's hair-oil, eye liner and even city-bought cream and powder to do her toilet. Special rich foods will be prepared for her if the family can afford it, and, if possible, they will try to send her back with a new blouse or dhoti for herself as well as a load of gifts for her in-laws. The general laxity of the māitā extends even to a woman's relations with men. No one will criticise a married daughter if she talks and laughs a little with men she meets on the paths of her natal village.¹⁵

Obviously, this indulgent situation in the māita is not meant to be a permanent one for women, and if it becomes so, serious structural problems and deep mutual resentment can result. The most open resentment comes from a woman's bhauju (brother's wife). As junior affinal woman in the household, the bhāuju does the hardest work and has the lowest status. Since she will be similarly pampered on visits to her own māita, the bhāuju is usually willing to defer to her nanda (husband's sister), but only on a temporary basis. In the case of one woman who returned permanently to her māita after her husband brought in a co-wife, the two bhāuju of the house complained bitterly to me of the hard field work they were forced to do in the hot sun, which dries them out and darkens their skin, while their nanda sits in the cool house doing the easy chores and maintaining her fair complexion. From this point it is easy to see how resentment spreads to the woman's own brothers. Not only do they have to listen the complaints of their own hard working wives, but they are forced to support a relatively unproductive household member (their sister) and her children. As long as the woman's parents are alive and the extended family is intact, her place and at least her food and clothes are assured. But when the joint estate is broken up after the father's death, the question of which brother takes on the support of the sister can be a problem--especially if the sister's relations with her brother's wives have been acrimonious and the family lands are already insufficient.

Women are, as I mentioned at the outset, well aware of their ultimately tenuous position in their māita. Many women informants expressed the feeling that only while their mother was alive did they have a firm right to remain in their māita. In fact, the nature of a woman's principal link to her natal home is expressed in the word "māita" itself which is derived from the mā or āmā (mother). As one informant confided to me about the insecurity of her marital situation: "My husband didn't love me in my ghar and even in my māita, I didn't have a mother." This woman also remembered her father expressing the same idea when he was trying to find her a suitable husband: "Her mother is dead. What to do if she is mistreated after her marriage? I won't be able to take her back and look after her." This attitude would seem to reinforce my interpretation of the ritual separations imposed at menarche, childbirth and widowhood between a woman and her consanguineal kinsmen. In all three cases, the mother and sisters may visit the sequestered woman freely. Her sexuality is no threat to them or to the maintenance of her sacredness to them. But for men, the sacredness and ideal purity of consanguineal women can only, it seems, be maintained at a distance.

Footnotes

1. 'Narikot' is pseudonym for the village in the Kathmandu Valley where I did field work for the period between 1972 to 1976.
2. Kumāri worship among the Newars is a more fully articulated expression of the same belief (Allen, 1975). The goddess ceases

to inhabit a young girl when menstruation (or some flaw like a bleeding cut, loss of teeth or a serious disease) renders her too impure to continue as a vehicle for the goddess.

3. I conducted a survey on marriage and fertility for all the Brahman-Chhetri women past menarche who were presently members of the local patrilineal kin groups of one hamlet in Narikot. Specifically, this group of fifty-nine women includes both married-in women and unmarried daughters who are still members of their father's thar and gotra. Married-out daughters who have become members of their husband's thar and gotra in other villages are not included.
4. Surya is a male deity worshipped by Brahman and Chhetri women on many occasions as a symbol of purity.
5. Nowadays the twelve-day period of seclusion even for unmarried girls is much more common. But many of my older informants recalled a twenty-two-day seclusion.
6. This informant was very fastidious about ritual purity. She was among those who believed menstruating women should not touch anyone except a nursing child. Many other women avoided only adult men during their periods.
7. This is a reference to the common belief that the witches can cause harm--especially fertility problems--if they are allowed to see the menstrual blood of a victim. It is part of this same belief which requires the bride to cover the sidur (vermillion powder) on the parting of her hair after the groom has first put it there. Female sexuality, then, is not only dangerous to men. Women themselves are vulnerable if their sexuality is not carefully shielded.
8. According to other informants and my own observations the girl herself performs the Surya Puja.
9. The red blouse and dhoti given here are actually preceded several years by the guniu cholo which is also red, given to daughters sometime after their seventh year for Brahmans and eleventh year for Chhetris on the eighth day of Dasai. In traditional hill families this would signal the girl's approach to marriageable age.
10. This ritual seclusion and purification is repeated for a period of seven days following the girl's second and third menses.
11. Often such children are abandoned before the nuhāran. If the child's umbilical cord is uncut when it is abandoned, it will assume the caste of whoever finds it and claims it by cutting the cord.

12. In all the cases of unmarried motherhood which I encountered, the lovers were known and were of acceptable (i.e. marriageable) caste status. In one instance, the disgraced girl was taken in as a kānchhi (youngest) wife--causing the husband's indignant elder wife to leave him and go to live in her māita. In another case, the girl's family managed to marry her off to an Indian in the distant Tarai where the fairness of hill women cancels out many other defects. In the third case, the boy--though of proper caste background--refused to marry the girl. She is still unmarried and expects to remain so, but her family had the resources to train her for a profession. She now supports herself (her child died soon after birth) as a school teacher.

None of these cases occurred in Narikot itself. Rather, they happened to more urbanized relatives of Narikot villagers and, in the eyes of the villagers, they reflect the dangers of the greater freedom (in terms of later marriage, education, even office jobs) allowed to "modern" middle class girls. Nevertheless, a fourth case, which did occur in the village (more than a decade ago), seems to have been accepted with surprisingly little permanent damage to the girl's place in the community. The unmarried sister of a village woman came to help her during her sutkeri period after child-birth and was impregnated by the woman's husband. They were informally married (with the diyo kalas puja ceremony) and now the two sisters have separate households in Narikot. The offspring of the second sister are of thimbu ("hybrid") rather than jharra ("pure") status because of the irregularity of her marriage--but otherwise the two women are treated as equal co-wives by villagers.

13. Vermillion powder (sidur) is included in the case of an unmarried girl in the fathers gift but informants stated emphatically that it was to be used only to make the red tika mark on the forehead and not to decorate the parting of the hair.
14. One vivid symbolic expression of this temporary loss of control over female sexuality in all three instances is the unoiled, un-combed hair which menstruous women, new mothers and new widows must all maintain.
15. In the Jumla region of far western Nepal the relaxation of behavioural standards in the māita is carried to an extreme. A married woman in her māita may go the all-night singing parties with eligible men (i.e. potential partners for a second or third marriage) from neighbouring villages. Such behaviour in her ghar would be a disgrace warranting at least a severe beating and perhaps permanent expulsion from her husband's house.

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Food Symbolism in Hindu Nepal

Linda Stone

Cultural symbols that derive from food and eating pervade high caste Hindu society in Nepal. A very similar preoccupation with food has been noted for other Hindu areas as well. Dumont (1970: 139) for instance, wrote of India that "psychologically and linguistically, there is considerable accent on 'the eating'." Along with Dumont, Stevensen (1954), Mayer (1970) and Marriott (1959) (1968) have discussed Hindu distinctions in food in relation to purity, pollution and caste ranking. Beals (1962: 20-22) refers to an association between food and social control in a village of South India. Eichinger Ferroldzzi (1977) has suggested that ritual food offerings in South India are complex communicative acts that can be analyzed much like language. Perhaps the most exhaustive discussion of food use and its symbolic importance in a Hindu area comes in recent works by Khare (1976^a, 1976^b) in North India.²

My material on Hindu food symbolism in Nepal is based on my fieldwork in the rural community of Dhungagaun³ located in the hills of Central Nepal. Brahmans and Chhetris predominate in Dhungagaun, although there are a number of other groups settled there, notably Thakuri, Jaisi, Magar, and Newar, as well as untouchable groups like Kami and Damai. Settled slightly above this village but in constant contact with it are the Tamangs -- a Tibeto-Burman speaking group. All of these groups practice farming, are patrilineal-virilocal and, with the exception of the Buddhist Tamangs, follow Hindu religious practices.

In Dhungagaun, the villagers' persistent symbolic use of food is apparent to even a casual visitor. The standard verbal greeting there is "bhāt khānubhāyo?" (have you eaten boiled rice?). And any discussion with elders about the old days will immediately bring forth references to food as a criterion for "the good life." Ideas about modernization and its attendant ambiguities are also expressed in an idiom of food. For instance, one Brahman informant described himself to me as a "a modern man" because he would eat anything he liked regardless of his caste-determined food prohibitions. A few days later this same informant commented to me that certain lower caste groups lag behind others in modern advancement because "they drink liquor" and "eat dead cow."

In Dhungagaun, as in Brahman-Chhetri society generally, there are additional social, ritual and linguistic ways in which "food and eating" emerge as potent symbolic markers. With food, gods are worshipped, ancestors sustained, and malignant spirits pacified. Certain foods and the act of eating may be ritually polluting, and the denial of food (fasting) is a form of purification, necessary before virtually any religious ritual. Equally notable, it is through food that caste status and some kinship statuses are distinguished.

I offer here an interpretation of food symbolism among Brahmans and Chhetris, based on comparisons, I have made on the use of food in various realms of Brahman-Chhetri life -- notably intercaste and interpersonal relationships, kinship, and finally, illness beliefs and practices. I will attempt to show that there is a consistency in the use of food symbols throughout these different cultural realms. These patterns then suggest a broader interpretation of how food symbols become a medium through which certain basic ideological principles of Brahman-Chhetri society are expressed. Specifically, rules of food transfer appear to simultaneously mark hierarchical relationships between people and to symbolize an interdependency among them. In addition, food use and references to food become a rhetoric not only of the proper social order of hierarchical, interdependent relationships, but also of conflicts and failings in society. This latter dimension of the symbolic role of food is most clearly expressed in local beliefs about illness and curing.

My information on food symbolism in Nepalese Hindu society is admittedly incomplete, and certainly I have attempted nothing comparable to the detailed observations by Khare (1976a) in North India. The interpretations I offer, then, are tentative and subject to modification with new or more detailed information.

Intercaste and Interpersonal Food

Students of Hindu India have discussed numerous attributes (all involving distinctions of purity and pollution) which serve to distinguish castes. These include occupations, diet, and caste customs like widow remarriage, wearing the sacred thread, etc. In his article, "Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking" (1959), Marriott demonstrates that these attributional criteria do not produce a logical system of ranking which correlates with real rankings of castes on the ground. In place of the attributional model of caste ranking, he proposes an interactional one, whereby the basis for a local caste ranking is the pattern of exchanges (in food and services) which occur between castes, with food transfers being "more decisive for establishing rank" (1959: 96).

Marriott has, for our purposes, drawn attention to food transference as an operational criterion by which Hindu society defines its local caste hierarchy. The place of food transfers in the ideology and practice of ranking in Dhungagaun seems to me particularly important. First, Dhungagaun villagers explicitly refer to food transfers as the principle means by which the caste hierarchy is operationalized; and secondly, in Dhungagaun, as with Nepal generally, caste-determined service relationships are far fewer than in rural India.

An important food distinction which has bearing on the caste hierarchy is that between raw and cooked foods.⁴ In terms of exchangeability, the line between raw and cooked parallels the distinction between touchable and untouchable castes (Kami and Damai in Dhungagaun). Untouchable groups may exchange raw foods with all touchable castes; but

they may only be receivers of cooked foods from touchable groups, who will not, in turn, accept cooked food from them. For this reason, Marriott (1959: 97) has appropriately called raw foods "the food of gifts" as they may be freely exchanged without threat to relative purity and caste rank.

A second major food distinction that underlies caste rank is that which divides dāl bhāt (boiled rice and lentils) from all other foods. Dāl bhāt, often referred to simply as bhāt, is synonymous with the concept of 'a meal'. As has been repeatedly noted for Hindu areas of both Nepal and India, bhāt is highly vulnerable to pollution. The eating of bhāt is a polluting act; and among high castes (whose male members wear the sacred thread) elaborate precautions must be made before the serving and consuming of bhāt in the home (see Dumont, 1970: 138-139). (Fig. 1)

It is this same every day food that is crucial to intercaste relations. The rule of bhāt transfer between castes is simple and clear: High castes may publically serve bhāt to lower castes and not the reverse. A person may receive bhāt from fellow caste members or from members of a caste which he recognizes as higher than his own. Any public failure to observe these restrictions results in loss of caste (the violator must assume the caste of the person whose bhāt, he ate, and his former caste mates will no longer accept his bhāt.⁵ Thus in any public, multicaste context where food is served (for example at weddings) Brahman cooks & servers are a necessity. (Fig. 2).

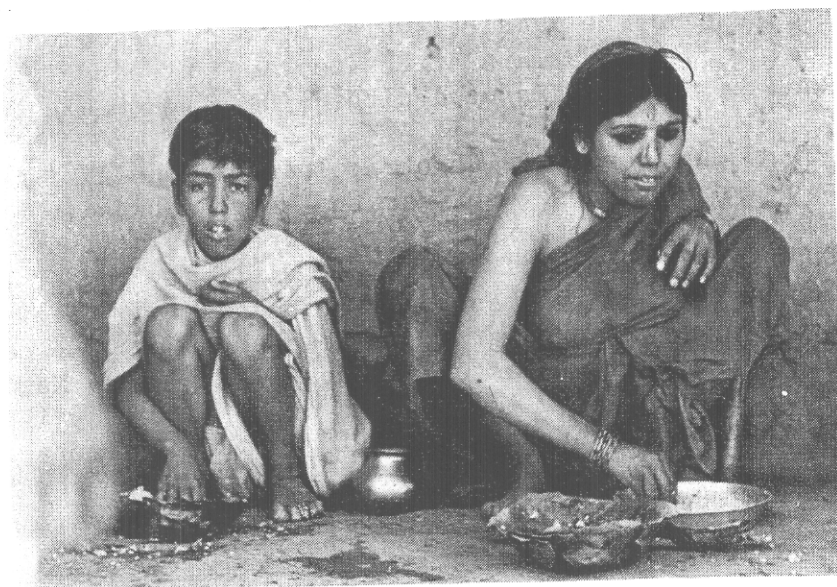


Fig. 1 The daily bhāt meal in a high caste home.

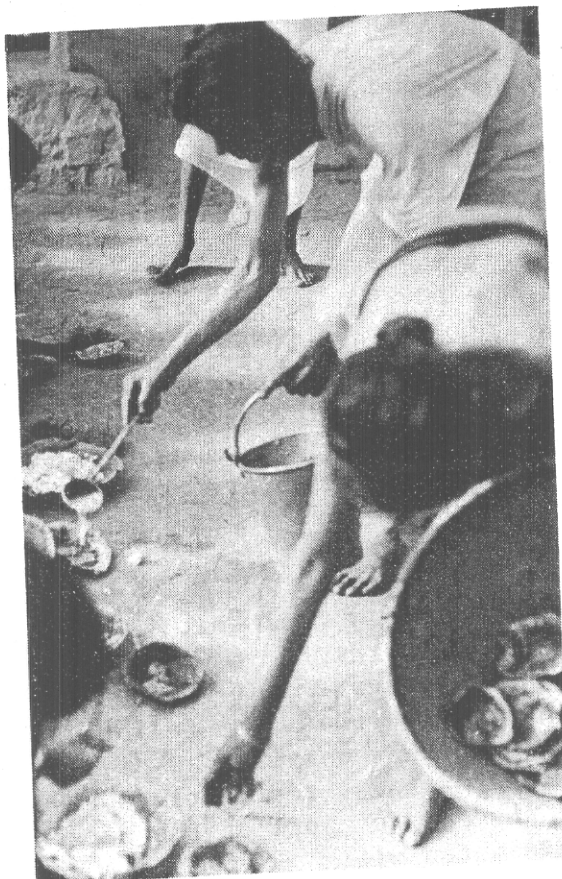


Fig. 2

Brahmans serving food at a wedding feast.

That caste standing is defined in terms of who takes what food from whom is made explicit as an idea by all my informants in Dhungagaun. On the other hand, there is some disagreement on the relative ranking of castes in the middle levels, between the universally accepted positions of Brahmins at the top and untouchables at the bottom. Rank is further disputed within the untouchable level.

Along with Brahmins, the Chhetri, Thakuri and Jaisi groups are classed as tagadhari (those who wear the sacred thread). Some members of these castes, while not explicitly asserting that they are "higher than" another group, do claim that they will only accept bhat from their own group or from Brahmins. By orthodox Hindu ideology, all tagadhari rank above another group of touchable Nepalese castes called matwali ("liquor-drinking" castes; groups like Tamang, Magar, Gurung, etc.). In Dhungagaun, many Tamangs and other matwali will accept the bhat of any tagadhari caste; but some local matwali, notably the Magars, claim they will only accept bhat from their own group and from Brahmins. Finally, the untouchable Kami and Damai accept bhat from any touchable caste but do not accept it from each other.

Thus there is no detailed hierarchy of agreed ranks for all castes; and there is no pattern of actual boiled rice transfers by which we could plot a food chain linking all castes. Although Brahmins regularly serve rice to all other castes, and all touchable castes serve rice to untouchables, some middle groups do not link themselves to one another

through rice transfers. This does not amount to cases of overt disputed rank, but rather the relative ranking of these groups is simply not made an issue. In these cases the significance of boiled rice is in its strategic absence.

There are other "food" rules which serve to mark caste boundaries, and these mostly involve the extreme ends of the hierarchy. For example, in Dhungagaun cigarettes and hookha pipes (even if smoked by cupping the hand over the mouthpiece) are not shared between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. All other touchable castes may share them; but no person of touchable caste can share them with an untouchable. Also water may be given and received between all touchable castes, but these castes cannot receive water from untouchables.⁶

With careful attention to these food rules, a great deal of food sharing and exchanging between castes can and does take place. This suggests that food exchanges have social uses aside from that of articulating caste distinctions. At the same time, since all food exchanges must (and do) publically take place with careful attention to these rules, an allusion to caste divisions is continually present.

There are several contexts of intercaste food transfer which reflect the extra-caste uses of food and at the same time serve as a continual reference to the ritual hierarchy of caste. Between castes, food may be used as payment for services. In cases where the caste standing of the giver is unequivocally high and that of the receiver low, bhāt is given. Hence it is customary for high castes to provide a bhāt meal for members of the untouchable service castes who come to work for them; and Brahmans may provide bhāt for any hired labourer. In reverse, Brahman priests are "paid" in raw foodstuffs by non-Brahman clients, but regularly take bhāt in the homes of their fellow Brahmans on the day that they perform a service for them.

Food may also be used to honour or please another -- hence, in some contexts to influence another or put pressure on him to reciprocate the honour by performing a particular favour. In this case, the more delectible "special foods" (foods that are fried in ghee rather than oil or food cooked in milk) are most appropriate. The use of these foods to please, honour or influence another is somewhat similar to one's attempt to please, honour or solicit help from the gods through the ritual feeding of equally pure (chokho) and delectible foods. One offers these "special foods" to another as a sign that he recognizes the honourific status of the other, or, in some contexts, as a means of establishing a more intimate social link with the other. Here, if the other person accepts the offered special foods, he is agreeing to allow this linkage, and a refusal would imply that he does not wish to promote such intimacy or place himself in a position where certain later requests or favours will be asked of him.⁷

Another closely related category of foods that carry clear communicative value in Brahman-Chhetri society are "rich" foods (generally prepared with large quantities of milk or ghee to which substances like sugar or honey are added) or simply any particularly sweet foods (mithai). Significantly, as we shall see later, these foods are also considered nutritious and strength-giving. But most important here, as Bennett has noted (1976: 41), is that these foods serve as vehicles of affection (maya) and concern for another. Rich, sweet foods are given to help one recover from illness; they are particularly given to women who have just given birth. Sweets are the food that husbands "sneak" to their wives as a private gesture of affection and approval (Bennett, 1976: 52). Sweets are regularly given to children, often as a means of rewarding them or encouraging good behaviour; and sweets are also often presented to household members by a married daughter returning to visit her beloved parental home.

The relation between caste, interpersonal relationships and food is complex. Whereas rules of bhāt transfer mark caste separation, many foods are freely exchanged between castes and eaten together by members of different castes. And with respect to the ritually significant bhāt, Stevenson (1954: 53) made the important point that "the fact that most endogamous groups will eat food cooked by higher status groups emphasizes the unity of the caste system as a whole, while defining status gradations within it." Similar ideas on food and caste in Hindu areas have been presented by Dumont (1970: 30).

Food, then, connects as much as it distinguishes. In the realm of intercaste/interpersonal relationships we find that food emerges as a symbol of interconnection as much as of hierarchy.

Kinship and Food

In the intercaste context of Nepalese Hindu society, it is clear that bhāt transfers are governed by one single principle: high feeds low. Here, "to feed" is to be ritually "more pure than". When we move into the intercaste realm, particularly within the endogamous group and within close circles of kinsmen, we find that bhāt transfers are also used to mark status distinctions. But in this intercaste realm, some transfers are governed by a reverse of the principle employed between castes -- i.e., low feeds high. This direction maintains in at least two contexts, both of which are evident in Dhungagaun and are known from India: 1) at a wedding, and in patterns that persist after the wedding, the bride's family (low) feeds bhāt to the groom's family (high), whereas the reverse cannot take place. In particular, a bride's father and brothers must not accept bhāt or any other food from their son-in-law's house (at least until their daughter has born a child) whereas it is important for them to feed the son-in-law whenever he visits their home. 2) A wife (low), by duty feeds her husband (high), and his family (high), although she may also be fed by them (but see p. 53).

The matter of the bride's family feeding the groom's family (and not the reverse) appears curious on first sight because studies of caste in Hindu areas have made us used to the idea of higher status groups feeding lower status groups. Dumont discusses the feeding rules established in marriage and resolves this problem (the "problem" remaining implicit in his discussion) by claiming that the transferred food is an extension of the "gift" of the bride. Food is a gift that accompanies the bride and which, like the kanyādān (gift of the virgin) must not be returned. Here Dumont is suggesting that we view the wedding food (even the bhāt) not in relation to ritual hierarchy, but as a simple, non-returnable gift. But then he goes on to refer to a ceremonial "morning collation" offered to the groom, and here ritual rank and hierarchy are suddenly back again:

... the tradition is that the bridegroom does not accept [the morning collation] until he has been entreated at length. Here the bridegroom's superior rank betrays itself: to agree to eat food with somewhat inferior people, the bridegroom claims a present (*italics mine*) (Dumont, 1970: 138).

Here the wedding food is no longer a simple gift; rather the bridegroom is "agreeing to eat with somewhat inferior people" and somehow "claiming a present" to diffuse this awkward reversal of direction. In the end it is unclear what meaning any of the wedding food transfers have.

I would suggest that the food transfers established at marriage can be consistently interpreted within the framework of "food marks hierarchy" but that there may be an important difference in the meaning of food, especially bhāt, when we move from the intercaste to the intercaste realm of affinal kinsmen. In my view, the bride's family, rather than saying, as it were, "take this food along with the bride and give us nothing in return" may be saying "as our daughter shall stand to your son as feeder within the household (low), so shall we stand to you as feeder within the endogamous group." Here "to feed" is to be subservient to. And the hierarchy that is marked by these rules of intercaste bhāt transfer appears to be based not on relative purity, as in the intercaste realm, but on relations of prescribed respect-giving and respect-receiving.

Within the Brahman-Chhetri kinship hierarchy, the feeding of bhāt would seem to be associated with the duty to nourish. There is a stress on the feeder "being pure enough" (for example a man cannot publically accept bhāt cooked by a lower caste wife and a menstruating woman cannot cook or serve bhāt to anyone) but clearly it is not important for the feeder to be "more pure than" the person fed, as is the rule of intercaste feeding.⁸ In fact, bhāt feeding among kin of one caste is at least in some contexts more comparable to the giving of a service in the intercaste realm.

This link between kinship and sustenance or duty to nourish also extends beyond this life and into the afterworld; for it is a profound religious duty for a son to ritually feed his parents, as in the annual srāddha ceremony.⁹ And here again a substance somewhat comparable to bhāt is used. In srāddha, descendants offer a pinda (rice ball) to their deceased kinsmen. Although the pinda is certainly not the same as the bhāt served in everyday meals, it is made with boiled rice (to which, albeit, "pure" substances like milk and yoghurt are added). More important than the boiled rice component, however, is that informants say the pinda is "like bhāt" or that it is their (the ancestors') bhāt. As one Dhungagaun priest explained to me, one earth-year is equivalent to one day in the pitrilok (abode of the dead). Thus as the living feed their ancestors once every earth-year, the srāddha constitutes a daily bhāt meal to the deceased.

Significantly, this extension into death of the duty to nourish close kinsmen reverses the actors: in life, parents sustain children; in death, children (more accurately, sons) sustain parents. Actually, this parent-son reversal in "duty to feed" is more often a gradual process that begins before the death of the parents. It may start with the partition of an older man's estate, when his sons divide their inheritance and separate their households. Here the elderly parents will be maintained in the household of one of the sons, whose duty it will be to care for them. Villagers consistently express this eventual reliance on sons as a nutritive dependency: "Who shall feed us when we are old if not our sons?"

Thus, in some contexts, the feeding of bhāt shows contrasts in both direction and in meaning when we compare the intercaste with the intracaste realm. There is, however, one food transfer among close kin which is directly comparable to the transfer of bhāt between castes: the transfer of jutho food (polluted food, i.e., food that has been partially eaten and so contaminated by one's saliva, the pollution extending to any plates, cups, etc., used by the eater). To receive another's jutho food is a very clear mark of one's inferiority. Perhaps the clearest expression of this is in man's worshipping of the gods, where the offered foods become the jutho of the gods and are then consumed (as prasād) by the devotees.

Among close agnatic male kinsmen, jutho food can only be transferred from high to low, following the agnatic hierarchy which is based on age. For instance a son can take the jutho food of his father, and not the reverse; and a younger brother can take the jutho food of the elder brother, and not the reverse. In fact, jutho exchanges only take place among very close kinsmen, and this does not necessarily persist far into adulthood. But in the case of husband and wife, the jutho transfers are persistent and more revealing. A woman may eat the jutho food of her husband, and not the reverse. And not only may a woman partake of her husband's jutho food, she must do so. After her husband has eaten, a Brahman or Chhetri woman does not take a clean plate for herself but must eat off her husband's jutho plate.

The inferiority of a woman to her husband, as expressed in jutho transference, is first established in the wedding ceremony. After the main wedding rituals have been performed, the bride and groom carry out a special rite called jutho khāne (eating the jutho). Here the groom eats a bit of kasar (a sweetmeat) and gives the remains to his bride. This is a ritual acknowledgement of the bride's inferior status and marks the beginning of her duty to eat only from her husband's jutho plate in the home.

Taking some of these food rules together, a set of equivalences emerges: man is to god as wife is to husband as low caste is to high. In terms of the foods used, prasād between men and gods is like jutho food between husband and wife is like bhāt between castes.

Circles of Food: Interdependency Amid Hierarchy

These observations bring us closer to understanding the ways in which foods serve to define various human interactions and to specify what kinds of relationships individuals and groups bear to one another. Amid the variety of foods used and the different meanings of particular food transfers, there is one theme discernible throughout most food exchanges in Dhungagaun: in marking hierarchical distinctions, the rules of food transfer simultaneously reflect interdependency. 'A' depends on 'B' for food, and by tracing through the connection, we find that 'B' is linked back again to 'A'. In effect there are "circles" by which people are linked together and the linkage is symbolically expressed in an idiom of food.

Three such "circles" are evident from the material presented here. First, in a real and obvious sense, a son depends on his parents for food. But "food" in this link assumes a new significance when in old age and in death it is reversed and the parents become dependent on their sons for food. A circle is formed; parents feed sons who then feed parents. Secondly, a mutual dependence is evident in the inter-caste realm where bhāt is used as payment for services. For services, high castes depend on low castes who then depend on high castes for their food. Finally, with the rule of jutho food transfer between husband and wife, it follows that if 'A' can take the jutho food of 'B' and not the reverse, then 'B' can determine how much of a certain food 'A' receives (or even if 'A' receives any). As Bennett (personal communication) reports, husbands may consume the better quality foods at meals, leaving little for their wives; or, as a special token of affection, the husband may thoughtfully leave some better quality food on his plate for his wife to eat. Thus the husband and wife are locked into a kind of circle similar to that between high castes and low castes and to that between parents and children. The husband depends on the wife to cook and serve his bhāt. And the wife depends on the husband for the quantity and quality of her portion of the food she has just served to him.

In these realms of caste and kinship, food symbolically separates statuses and then links people back together again. Hierarchy and interdependency are expressed at once and this is consistent with the equally hierarchical and interdependent socio-economic links between people in Dhungagaun. Sons, for instance, depend on their parents not just for their food but for their portion of the family land. In turn, older people depend on their sons to care for them in their old age; and this exchange between land and care-taking is made quite explicit by Brahman-Chhetri informants. In innumerable other ways, members of various kinship groups are socially locked together so that the behaviour of one reflects on all. And economically the pariwar (household group of relatives) is a unit within which the members must both co-operate to survive, and compete with one another for access to the limited family resources. In rural Brahman-Chhetri villages, similar interlinkages and interdependencies are formed that cut across caste and kinship lines. It is clear that in communities like Dhungagaun, one must rely not only on individual achievement and effort but must also work through his multiple links with others for access to the social and economic "goods" available.

But just as food transfers are symbols of linkage and interdependency, so the denial of food can symbolize social conflict. A sudden refusal to offer or receive food can serve as an immediate expression of anger. With the cessation of food exchanges, social relations can be effectively broken off. In Dhungagaun, intrahousehold quarrels surface and become public when members of a joint family separate their kitchens and are said to be "refusing to eat together." In turn, resumption of normal eating patterns signals that the household members have patched up their differences.

Food in Illness Ideology

So far I have largely emphasized the "proper" order of society that a cultural emphasis on food reveals: people should feed one another by the rules of caste and kinship transfers. The "circles" linking people should be maintained, as backed by both social and religious prescriptions. To feed and be fed, up and down hierarchies and across lines of life and death, are positive processes and suggestive of the integration of society and of individuals' prescribed place within a social order. What I have been maintaining is that Brahman-Chhetri society is founded on the idea of a hierarchical interdependency among its members, within which innumerable "goods" are distributed and exchanged, and that this ordered interlocking is symbolized by prescribed food transfers.

At the same time, I suggest that the workability of human exchanges is seen as imperfect by Brahmans and Chhetris of Dhungagaun and that one basis for this notion of "imperfection" in the system is the real and sharply perceived scarcity of material goods among them. Obviously all societies must cope with a scarcity of certain commodities. But what concerns me here is not so much the facts of scarcity, but the ideology of

scarcity. The villagers of Dhungagaun are poor by world standards and, in particular, they face a severe and increasing land shortage. But regardless of how one might evaluate their poverty, what remains significant is that many of them perceive themselves as poor, as getting poorer, and as constrained to struggle within a world of uncertain and unstable material welfare. In many ways Foster's (1967) notion of "the image of the limited good" in peasant societies applies to rural Nepalese communities like Dhungagaun, or as one informant expressed it (in reference to conflict in his own extended family): "The problem is that we all want the same things and there isn't enough for everyone." In other words, along with the culturally pervasive notions of hierarchy and interdependence is the notion that the integrated "whole" (the caste, the community, the lineage, the family etc.) can never perfectly satisfy the needs of all the parts. Someone or some group will be left out, left in need, and this constitutes a source of danger.

It is here that ideas about illness become significant and revealing, for illness is a negative physical and social state, perhaps even more so when it is surrounded by speculations of witchcraft or diagnoses of malignant spirits, as is common in Dhungagaun and other areas of Nepal. In illness ideology we can see a negative extension of some of the cultural themes already discussed; and again, it is the use of food and food transfers that serve as a symbolic rhetoric through which these ideas are expressed.

There are innumerable ways in which food symbols penetrate the realm of illness and curing.¹⁰ Most obvious, perhaps, is that moto (fatness or plumpness) is considered the very epitome of good health, while thinness (dublo) is associated with a weak and vulnerable state. Already this suggests a connection: to be moto is to be fed, and what is more, it suggests that one is being regularly fed. By extension, the ideas about moto and good health are suggestive of the positive aspects of social feeding, of maintaining interdependency in a proper way. In the abstract, a person's attribute of moto is a clue that he or she is an integrated member of the community and assumes proper, food-receiving positions vis a vis others. What is more, a moto person is likely a frequent recipient of rich or sweet foods that serve as vehicles for affection. As Bennett has noted of Brahman-Chhetri children: "A fat child -- like a plump woman -- is not only considered healthy and attractive, but beloved." (1976: 41).

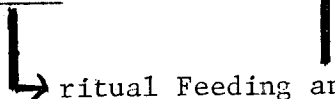
A thin (dublo) person is considered unattractive as well as vulnerable to illness, and I would suggest that this might be because, in direct opposition to moto, dublo possibly carries cultural associations of detachment and severance from others. To be thin is to be unfed or irregularly fed, to lack proper linkages with others.

Obviously, there are plenty of cases of real people in Brahman-Chhetri villages who are thin but nevertheless well fed, who are surrounded by food-giving kinsmen, and who enjoy a host of proper food-receiving positions. All I am suggesting is that one underlying reason why moto is so highly praised and dublo seen as unattractive is

that these attributes have symbolic associations with one's position in society, where food exchanges (feeding and being fed) become an idiom for both proper and "improper" (unlucky, inauspicious) social states.

An even more pertinent way in which food symbols enter beliefs about health and illness, and a way that lends support to the above interpretation of moto and dublo, concerns the illness-causing malignant spirits that plague residents of Dhungagaun. Some of these spirits are listed below, along with certain higher spiritual forces:

<u>Lowly Spirits</u>		<u>Higher Spiritual Forces</u>
(fed to pacify)		(fed to sustain and keep safe) (Fed to please)
<u>bhūt</u>		
<u>Pret</u>		<u>/bayu/</u> High gods (Shiva, etc.)
<u>Masān</u>		<u>Graha</u> (planets)
<u>Picās</u>		<u>pitri</u> (ancestors)
		<u>Kuldevata</u> (lineage gods)


 ritual Feeding and ritual Transformation

On the left are the illness-causing malignant spirits. The bhūt, pret, masān and picās are all spirits formed from the souls of humans who have died inauspiciously (e.g. by fire, by water, or by accident) or for whom proper funeral rituals were not performed. Significantly, the people who will inevitably and without question become one of these "ghosts" are those who died without any kinsmen to perform their funeral rituals at all. A clear majority of the people of Dhungagaun profess a belief in these evil spirits. But there is variation in belief, and at one extreme some villagers claim that the spirits are only "superstitions." In any event, in discussing these spirits and their connection with food symbolism, I am referring to general cultural concepts--i.e. categories that all villagers recognize as elements of their own tradition, regardless of the extent to which they personally may have broken from this tradition.

These malignant spirits are considered apart from and decidedly lower than the dieties to the right in the above chart. Significantly their lower status is marked by food, as they are often given highly impure substances like human hair and fingernail. These malignant spirits are collectively called lagu.¹¹ They cause any variety of illnesses by directly and maliciously striking individuals. Although the higher spiritual forces do not maliciously strike individuals in order to cause illness, they can become angry--if, for instance, they are neglected in worship or are otherwise offended by the sins of men.

Hence, as with the lagu, one can have troubled relationships with them and suffer misfortune (even illness) as a result.

But a more significant contrast between these spiritual forces concerns their state of food-dependency on man and hence their motives for influencing human life. Here the lagu represent an extreme. They attack man because they are constantly and desperately hungry; and their attack is directly designed to elicit a food offering from their victims. Man feeds the lagu to temporarily pacify them. With the other spiritual forces, hunger and a dependency on man for food become less significant as we move from left to right on the chart. The pitri (ancestors who died properly), the bāyu (a transformed ancestral ghost, discussed below) and the kuldevata (lineage gods) are also dependent on man for their food. But in contrast to the lagu, who are only fed when they have caused illness, these other spiritual entities are regularly fed in special worship ceremonies. Man feeds them in order to sustain them, and by so doing to fulfill a religious obligation. People may fear that they have failed to feed these spirits properly, and hence these spirits are considered potentially dangerous. Nevertheless, there is the idea that these spiritual forces can be kept safe as long as they are properly and regularly sustained with food. If these spirits harm an individual, it is not with malicious intent but out of anger that someone has failed in his obligations to them. They are in any case in a much better position than the lagu, who are forced to wander in painful hunger from the moment of their inauspicious creation. Whatever food the lagu wrangle from man is only a temporary relief, and hence the lagu are perpetually dangerous.

On the far right of the chart are the high Hindu gods (e.g. Shiva) and the planet gods (graha). These gods are not only regularly worshipped, and hence regularly fed, but they are not so desperate for food. Food is given more as a means to please them than to either sustain or pacify them.

With the lagu then, we find the most direct link between human illness and the danger of an unfed force, as well as a link between the concepts of feeding and therapy. But there are two other local ideas that reinforce and extend the connection between illness and the importance of food and feeding. One is the notion that not only can these spirits strike on their own but any of them might also be sent by a female witch (bokshi). Thus when villagers fear these spirits they also are expressing a fear of one another. Interestingly, the way that a witch induces a lowly spirit to do her bidding is to feed the spirit herself, especially if she agrees to do so on a more or less regular basis. Her control rests on her agreement to feed.

A second local notion is that in a state of illness caused by a malignant spirit one is being fed upon.¹² The spirit, in effect, is "eating" the victims' body and must be pacified with some substitute food, such as pieces of hair and fingernail from the victim. This notion that food given to pacify spirits is considered a substitute for the victim's own body has also been reported elsewhere in Nepal (see Blustain, 1974: 93).

We can see in these ideas about the afterworld a reflection of cultural notions about the world of the living as well. The ghosts are unfed or irregularly fed. They are as helpless people would be and as beggars are (whether religious mendicants or simply poor): they are outside the proper order of this-worldly society, which entails a proper system of feeding and being fed.

In a milieu of perceived material scarcity, the insufficiency of material goods and the demands made on one by those in need become a specific problem of everyday life in Dhungagaun. But it is in conceptions of spirit-caused illnesses that recognition and fear of this is expressed as a general cultural theme. Thus the harm-giving spirits represent the ultimate failure of the existing social order. They are a symbolic realization of the potential for disharmony in human exchanges. These spirits are the ultimate losers, as marked in the first place by their inauspicious creation, or by the fact that they died without dependants, and as expressed symbolically in their attributes of hunger and being but irregularly fed. Yet by virtue of having died improperly they acquire power (the ability to cause illness) by which to press their claims for food back on to the human community.

These ways in which the world of the spirits mirrors that of man can be most clearly seen in beliefs about one very particular spirit, the bāyu.¹³ The bāyu begins as an ordinary ghost -- a bhut, pret, masan or picās -- and as one of these it wanders in hunger. But this ghost, rather than attacking just anyone, may elect, as it were, to attack its own surviving agnatic kinsmen, members of its former kul (lineage). Thus a male ghost attacks the house of its agnatic kul; an unmarried female ghost attacks her fathers' kul and a female ghost who married before dying should attack members of her husband's kul (C.F. Hoffer and Shrestha, 1973). A medical specialist (dhami-jhankri) might diagnose that illnesses in a family or kul are being caused by such an ancestral ghost. The cure, then, is to ritually transform this spirit into a bāyu. This occurs in a special ceremony where the bāyu is invoked and the gathered kul members agree to feed the spirit on a regular basis from now on (at a minimum this is a once-a-year feeding). Most significant is that the creation of a bāyu raises the bāyu's spiritual status. The bāyu literally moves up in the spiritual hierarchy as represented in the chart above. A bāyu is no longer a lowly, illness-inflicting lagu. It is no ordinary wandering ghost but a ghost that has come home to eat.

Once a bāyu is created, it not only ceases its harm, but may become positively helpful. The bāyu may be invoked at any time to give advice to kul members on their problems, and generally this invocation is carried out at least once a year during the ritual bāyu-feeding ceremony. Thus the bāyu represents a regular and institutionalized means whereby a spirit of the lower realm is moved upward; and the elevation of the bāyu's rank parallels the movement from illness to health, from harm to help, for the kinsmen involved.

Conclusion

This study of food symbolism in Brahman-Chhetri culture has attempted to reveal a consistency in the symbolic uses of food in various realms of Brahman-Chhetri life. Notions about food in illness beliefs, particularly beliefs about evil spirits, reflect the same concern with hierarchy, interdependence and scarcity that maintain in Brahman-Chhetri kinship, intercaste and interpersonal relationships. For one thing, the very existence of the harmful spirits rests on the idea of an interdependency among men that persists after death. The community, in effect, cannot ignore its spiritual "losers"; where it fails to feed, it faces being fed upon.

The bāyu more specifically represents the persistence of patrilineal responsibilities after death. The kul cannot ignore a departed member who is suffering the plight of a miserable ghost. For this spirit has the power to strike its own kul and press its claim to a permanent readmittance into the more harmonious realm of regular feeding. In the beliefs about the bāyu, we can also see the notions of social ordering and hierarchy. The bāyu begins as a hungry, wandering ghost, but once its agnatic survivors agree to feed it on a regular basis, the bāyu's status is elevated and fixed so that it will become safe and helpful.

In my view, the concern with and fear of malignant spirits in Dhungagaun is an extension of a culturally recognized imperfection in the social order. What villagers appear to recognize is that since all desired things in life are scarce, all the ordered interdependency, all the ordered give-and-take in the world, cannot possibly ensure sufficiency to all. Someone, some force, will always be in need. However well one succeeds in the earthly game of give and take, he cannot, by the principle of interdependency itself, entirely separate himself from the fact that there are losers. At all times those in need may make demands on him; at any point they may acquire the power to force their claims. The only recourse is to recognize this inevitable problem in life and to keep up the system of giving and taking (feeding and being fed) is an ordered way.

I have attempted to show that food in Brahman-Chhetri culture is a code through which this principle is established and expressed. In brief, the notions of "fed" "unfed" and "fed upon" serve as a kind of progressive cultural metaphors through which man's physical, social and spiritual relationships are articulated. My conclusion on how Brahman-Chhetri food symbols can be interpreted to reveal a broader cultural ideology is summarized below:

	The Fed	The Unfed	The fed upon
relations between spirits and man	lineage gods, high gods, ancestors, <u>bāyu</u>	ghosts, dissatisfied ancestors, etc.	man
	Safe	Harmful	Harmed
social state of man	proper place in the human community (receiver of affection)	precarious place in the human community	a receiver of socio-economic demands or claims
Physical state of man	plump, healthy (<u>moto</u>)	Thin, vulnerable to illness (dublo)	ill

Here "the fed" marks positive categories of things "made safe." On the spiritual plane are the higher dieties (pleased at being fed by man) the disarmed bāyu and the sustained lineage gods and ancestors. On the social plane, "to be fed" marks integrated membership in the human community. The "unfed" by contrast, are dangerous categories: in life and in death the "unfed" are left outside the proper order of society, are in need, and so become a source of danger. Finally, the "fed upon" mark the negative results of the inevitable failings in a social order based on hierarchy and interdependence amid scarcity.

Footnotes

1. I would like to thank Lynn Bennett, Gabriel Campbell and Prayag Raj Sharma for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. For Nepal, Sherry Ortner (1970) has analyzed food symbols among the Buddhist Sherpa. Unfortunately, I have not yet had an opportunity to compare this work with my material on food symbols among Hindu groups.
3. Dhungagaun is a pseudonym for the community in which I conducted field-work from 1973-1975 under a fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. However, the conclusions drawn are those of the author alone.

4. My use of food distinctions in Dhungagaun (especially raw vs, cooked) obviously draws from the fundamental inspiration provided by Levi - Strauss (1965, 1969). More recently, Khare (1976b: 1-3) has suggested that for Hindu India a distinction between "cooked" and "uncooked" is more precise since foods assume a new importance once they have been "prepared" by means other than cooking with heat, e.g. by being washed or peeled. I would suspect that Khare's distinction is more precise for Hindu Nepal as well.
5. In some private contexts a person may consume bhat cooked by a lower-caste person without risk to caste standing. For example villagers say that a man who has eloped with a lower caste woman will likely eat bhat cooked by her in the privacy of their home.
6. I do not know to what extent water and cigarettes are actually classed as "food" by Dhungagaun villagers. However, an act of drinking water or smoking cigarettes is normally expressed with the verb khānu (to eat) that is used with all other foods. It is also interesting to note that the names of certain caste categories refer to liquids -- for example, the untouchable groups are sometimes called pani na chalne (people from whom water is not acceptable) and a number of castes are called matwali (liquor-drinking).
7. Ortner (1978): 61-90) has discussed similar social uses of food in the context of Sherpa "hospitality."
8. Here, individual orthodoxy varies. Some Brahmans, for example, will refuse some foods or even all food from other members of their own caste on the grounds that this would undermine their own individual purity.
9. In srāddha, parental ancestors up to three generations must be fed -- i.e. a man's F, M, FF, FFW, FFF, and FFFW.
10. Space does not permit an examination here of all of the links between illness and food. Among the more important ones not discussed here are ideas about maintaining a "hot" and "cold" balance in food intake along with other dietary rules that are related to health & illness. In addition, one of the most common ways that witches (boksi) cause illness is through "poisoning" their victims food.
11. This chart does not list all the malignant forces in Dhungagaun but only those that are formed from human souls. In addition to these are the bir (demons) that "simply exist."

12. Although the notion of one's literally being eaten is restricted to illnesses caused by malignant spirits, the imagery of illness as being "fed upon" carries over into general concepts of illness, regardless of cause. For example, one word for heart attack, heart trouble or sharp chest pain is mutu khāne ("heart devouring"). Similarly, a food-eating image surrounds the word dhamki (asthma). In times of quarrel, one may insult another person by calling him dhamki ko ahar, "the [mere] food (prey) of the asthma disease." Villagers say that because of the association between the word dhamki and this insulting expression, the word dhamki should be avoided when one is speaking to or about a real asthma sufferer whom one does not wish to insult. In these contexts, expressions meaning "breathlessness" are used instead. An insult phrase parallel to dhamki ko ahar can also be formed with the illness term bhiringi (syphilis).
13. For an excellent discussion of the creation and ritual treatment of the bāyu in Central Nepal, see Sharma (1970).

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लेखपट्ट

नेपालको प्राचीन इतिहासमा लिच्छविकाल अत्यन्त उज्ज्वल छ । त्यस वेला राजनैतिक उत्थान मात्र होइन, विद्याको क्षेत्रमा पनि निकै प्रगति भएको थियो । त्यस वेला लेखपट्टको भाषा पनि संस्कृत थियो । संस्कृतमा लेखिएका प्राँढ अभिलेखले हामीलाई यो कुराको ज्ञान गराउँछन् । तिनै संस्कृत अभिलेखका बीचमा पर्ने आएका पारिभाषिक शब्द र नाममा छुट्टै भएको कतिपय स्थानीय भाषाका शब्दहरूले पनि त्यस वेला बोलचालको भाषा चाहिँ अर्कै भएको कुरा ज्ञात हुन्छ र सो भाषा वर्तमान कालमा नेपालमा प्रचलित नेवारी भाषाको पूर्वरूप नै थियो भन्ने अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । यस अतिरिक्त प्राकृत भाषाको पनि यहाँ प्रचार भएको अनुमान हुन्छ । यद्यपि प्राकृतका त्यस वेलाका नमूना अहिले हामीसँग केही प्राप्त भइसकेका छैनन्, तापनि त्यस वेला बोलचालदेखि लेखपट्टसम्म पनि प्राकृतमा हुन्थ्यो भन्ने कुरा अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । किनकि पुरानो बौद्ध साहित्य पालि प्राकृतमै भएको र बौद्ध धर्मको प्रचार पहिलेदेखि नै नेपालमा रहेको र उता नजीक भारतमा बोलीचालीदेखि लेखापढीमा समेत प्राकृतको प्रयोग भइरहेको हुँदा नेपालमा बसोबासो गरिरहेका र गर्दै गरेका बौद्धमार्गी शैवमार्गी वैष्णवमार्गी प्रजाहरू सबै नै स्थानीय भाषाभाषी मात्र नभएर प्राकृत बोल्ने पनि थिए भन्न सकिन्छ । जे भए पनि त्यस वेला बोलीचालीको र अरू भाषाको नमूना नपाइएकोले यो अनुमानकै भरमा भन्नु परिरहेछ । पछि मल्ल-कालमा भने हामीले संस्कृत प्राकृत मैथिली अवधी नेवारी आदि स्थानीय भाषाका प्रशस्त नमूना पाइरहेका छौं ।

लिच्छवि कालमा लेखपट्टमा चलेको संस्कृत भाषा थियो भन्ने हामीलाई कुनै संकोच वा शङ्का छैन । यद्यपि त्यस वेला लिखित कुनै ग्रन्थ हामीले अहिले प्रमाणिक रूपले पाइरहेका छैनौं तापनि त्यस वेला शिलामा कुदाएर राखेका राजाका प्रशस्तियुक्त सुन्दर पद्यावली सनदपत्र र अरू कनकपत्राभिलेख मुद्राभिलेख शिलालेखले पनि त्यस वेला पढाइको स्तर उच्च थियो, संस्कृत साहित्यको निकै प्रचार थियो भन्ने कुरा ज्ञात हुन्छ । शिलामा कपेर लेखिएका कतिपय सुन्दर प्राँढ पद्यले त्यस वेला यहाँ संस्कृतमा सरलसंग कविता काव्य लेख्न सक्ने विद्वान् रहेछन् भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन्छ ।

यस अतिरिक्त ती अभिलेखबाट विविध शास्त्रको लेखपट्ट र विविध यज्ञ यागादिको प्रचार पनि यहाँ भएको बुझिन्छ^१ । वैदिक श्रौतग्रन्थको अध्ययन अनुशीलन-विना यज्ञ यागादि गर्न सम्भव नहुने हुँदा वैदिक ग्रन्थको पठनपाठन यहाँ रहेको कुरा पनि स्पष्ट हुन्छ । राजकाज सञ्चालन गर्ने र लौकिक व्यवहार चलाउन पनि उपयोगी भएका मनुस्मृति यमस्मृति

शुक्रनीति र बृहस्पतिको अर्थशास्त्रको पनि पढाइ यहाँ चलेको थियो^२ । संस्कृत साहित्यको ज्ञानका लागि अत्यन्त उपयोगी व्याकरण ग्रन्थको पनि यहाँ प्रचार प्रसार रहेको थियो^३ । यी सब कुराबाट लिच्छवि कालको नेपालमा संस्कृतविद्याको राम्रै पठन पाठन चलेको र त्यसका विशेष अधिकारी विद्वान् पनि भएकामा सन्देह हुन्न । यसै प्रसङ्गमा त्यस बेलाका एक संस्कृत विद्वान्को विषयमा हामी यहाँ अलिकता चर्चा गर्ने लागेका हौं ।

प्रथम मानदेवको चाँगुनारायण स्थानमा रहेको शिलास्तम्भमा कुदिएको प्रशस्तियुक्त पद्यावली नेपालमा तयार भएको प्रथम साहित्य हो । यो पद्यावली कथ्ने कविको नाम दुर्मा-ग्यवश हामीले पाउँन सकेका छैनौं । पुष्कारमा कविता बनाउनेको नाम थियो वा थिएन, स्तम्भ फेदमा भाचिएकोले यसै भन्न सकिदैन । मूल स्तम्भ उखालेर पुष्कारसम्म हेर्न सकेको खण्डमा यसको टुडप्पो लाग्ने थियो भन्ने आशासम्म रहिरहेको छ ।

अनुपरमको कविता र विद्वत्ता

मानदेवपछि चाँगुनारायण स्थानमा जस्तै हाडिगाउँको सत्यनारायण स्थानमा अर्को गरुडस्तम्भ स्थापित भएको पाइन्छ । यसमा कुदिएको द्वैपायन व्यासको स्तोत्र मानदेवको प्रशस्ति-जस्तै प्राँढ संस्कृत पद्यमा लेखिएको छ^४ । वेदान्त सूत्रमा आधारित अद्वैतदर्शनको प्रतिपादन यस स्तोत्रमा गरिएकोले यसको विषय पनि गहन छ । यति गहन विषयलाई पनि सजिलै पद्यमा उतार्न सफल भएका यसका रचनाकार अनुपरम सफल कविका गणनामा आउन सक्छन् । उनको लेखनशैली सुन्दर छ । ब्रह्मसूत्रको भाव श्लोकमा उतार्न खोजिएको छ । उनको चौँतीस श्लोकको यो स्तोत्रमा ब्रह्मसूत्रको धेरै भाव आउनु त संभव भएन । तर पनि यस स्तोत्रमा अनुपरमले बौद्धहरूले खण्डन गरेर आफाल्न लागिएको वेद, वेदधर्मलाई पुनः प्रतिष्ठापन गर्ने रूपमा द्वैपायन व्यासलाई प्रशंसा गरेका छन् । 'कुतार्किं बौद्धहरूले हटाउन लागिएको वेदलाई सप्रमाण तपाईंले अड्याउने काम गर्नु भयो' । 'वेद तथा वैदिक धर्मको पनि स्थापना तपाईंले नै गर्नु भयो'^५ । 'संसाररूपी समुद्रमा हुबेका अज्ञानरूपी अन्धकारले ढाकेका मानिसलाई मुक्ति-मार्गमा लाउनु भयो'^६ । 'संसारको हित गर्ने उद्देश्यले भारत लेखेर त्यसैमा सबै शास्त्र देखाइदिनु भयो'^७ । यस अतिरिक्त आत्मा परमात्माका विषयमा सोलेर भन्न सक्ने तपाईं भन्दा अहंको समर्थ हुन्थ्यो^८ । यसरी विविध रूपले व्यासको स्तुति गरिएको छ । अन्त्यमा आफ्ना बाबुको बढिबढाउको माग गर्दै स्तोत्र समाप्त गरिएको छ र (भगवतो द्वैपायनस्य स्तोत्रं०-कृतमनुपरमेण) 'भगवान् व्यासको यो स्तोत्र अनुपरमले बनाएको हो' भनिएको छ ।

यसबाट यो स्तोत्रका रचयिता अनुपरम रहेछन् भन्ने कुरा खुल्दछ । यस अतिरिक्त यिनको परिचय यहाँ छैन । यो स्तोत्र पढ्दा उनी वेदान्ती ब्रह्मसूत्रका व्याख्याता ब्रह्मसूत्रका रचनाकार द्वैपायन व्यासका भक्त बौद्ध मतको खण्डन गर्ने थिए भन्ने कुरा ज्ञात हुन्छ । साथै मनु यम शुक्राचार्य बृहस्पतिहरूले बनाएका स्मृति धर्मशास्त्र अर्थशास्त्रमा पनि यिनी पोख्त

थिए,^६ महाभारत पनि यिनले पढेका थिए भन्ने कुरा पनि यिनले ती ती आचार्य र ती ग्रन्थको संफना गरेवाट प्रकट हुन्छ ।

ब्रह्मसूत्रको व्याख्या गर्दै शाङ्कर-भाष्य लेख्ने शङ्कराचार्यले निराकार ब्रह्मको सिद्धि गरेका हुन् । तर त्यही ब्रह्मसूत्रको प्रशंसा गर्ने व्यासको स्तुति लेख्ने अनुपरमले गरुडध्वजस्थापना गरेर साकार मूर्तिकै उपासना गरेका भए पनि ब्रह्मसूत्रका व्याख्या गर्न सक्नेमा यिनको नाम लिन सकिन्छ । यसरी यिनी बहुमुखी प्रतिभा भएका एक व्युत्पन्न विद्वान्को रूपमा देखा पर्छन् ।

महाभारतका कर्ता ब्रह्मसूत्रका रचनाकार द्वैपायन व्यासको स्तुति अनुपरमले शिलास्तम्भमा कुँदाएर गरुडमूर्तिसहित भएको सो शिलास्तम्भ सत्यनारायणका मन्दिर अघाडि खडा गरे । यसै ताका वि.सं. ५८७ मा द्वैपायन व्यासको चेला वैशम्पायनको पनि मूर्ति स्थापना गरेर याज्ञिक ब्राह्मण विप्रसेन ध्रुवसेन वृद्धिसेन वेदमट्टहल्ले वैशम्पायनको पूजा चलाउन मनी जगा गूठी राखेर शिलालेख राखेका थिए^{१०} ।

यसबाट त्यस बेला व्यास वैशम्पायनको प्रतिमा स्थापना गर्ने पूजा आज्ञा चलाउने प्रथा प्रचलित थियो र यसै परम्पराका विद्वान् अनुपरम पनि थिए भन्ने कुरा देखिन्छ ।

अनुपरमको वंश -

अनुपरमको विषयमा जानकारी लिन हामी त्यसै बेलाको अर्को अभिलेख हेर्छौं । सो शिलालेखबाट उनका विषयमा निकै कुरा खुल्ने हुँदा त्यसको केही चर्चा यहाँ गर्न लागेको छ ।

पशुपतिनाथको दक्षिण चौसठ्ठी लिङ्गनेरको एक शिवलिङ्गको पाद-पीठमा एक अभिलेख रहेको छ । सो अभिलेख आभीरी गोमिनीले शाके ४६२ (वि.सं. ५६७) मा शिवलिङ्ग स्थापना गरेर राखेको हो^{११} । यो अभिलेखमा लेखिएको भाव यस्तो छ -

‘परमाभिमानिका ह्योराकी पत्नी नाम चलेकी आभीरी गोमिनीले स्वर्गे भएका आफ्ना पतिको पुण्य बढोस् भन्नाका लागि आफ्ना ह्योराको अनुमति लिएर यो शिवलिङ्गको स्थापना गरिन् । आफूले स्थापना गरेका अनुपरमेश्वर नाम गरेका यी महादेवको नित्य पूजा-आज्ञा चलाउन र जीर्णोद्धार गर्न समेत भनेर धेरै धनसम्पति जगा-जमीन गूठी राखिन् । पति-व्रता आभीरी गोमिनीले स्वर्गे भएका पतिको पुण्य बढाउन र भौमगुप्त समेतका ह्योराह्योरीको आयु आरोग्य भोग ऐश्वर्यको कामना गर्दै यो पुण्य कर्म गरकी हुन्’^{१२} । यो शिलालेख अनुसार आभीरीका ससुरा परमाभिमानिका र ह्योरा चाहिँ भौमगुप्त हुन् भन्ने कुरा प्रकट हुन्छ, वि.सं. ५६७ मा भौमगुप्त समर्थ भइसकेका थिए भन्ने कुरा पनि यसबाट बुझिन्छ । ह्योराको अनुमति लिएर यो पुण्य कार्य मैले गरेकी हुँ भनेर आभीरीले स्पष्ट भनेकी हुन् । नेपालको इतिहासमा भौमगुप्तको ठूलो स्थान छ ।

अंशुवर्मा-अधि लिच्छवि राजासँग मिलेर शासन गर्नेमा यिनको नाम देखापर्छ । मानदेव-पछि राजशासनमा भारदारको र सामन्तको शक्ति बढेको थियो । उनका नाति वसन्तदेवका अभिलेखमा महाप्रतिहार सर्वदण्डनायकको पदमा रहेका रविगुप्तको अधिकार बढेको थियो । रविगुप्तपछि सो पद प्राप्त गरेका माँम-गुप्तले आफ्नो राजशक्ति पनि निकै बढाएका थिए । फण्डे आधा शताब्दीसम्म लिच्छवि राजालाई अठ्याएर नेपालको शासन चलाएका थिए । वि.सं. ५६७ मा समर्थ भएका त निश्चयनै थिए, कुनै शासनाधिकार पनि पाएको अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ । गणदेव गङ्गादेव शिवदेवका पालासम्म अर्थात् वि.सं. ६१४ देखि ६४७ सम्म त यिनी पुरा शक्तिशाली थिए^{१३} ।

आफ्नो शिलालेखमा ससुरा ह्योराको नाम भने आमीरीले स्पष्ट लेखाएकी छन् । पति-को नाम चाहिँ नलेखाएर परमामिमानीका ह्योरा यतिमात्र भनेकी छन् । तर स्थापना गरिएका शिवजीको नाम अनुपरमेश्वर भन्ने देखिन्छ । जसले शिवजीको स्थापना गर्‍यो, अथवा जसको लागि स्थापना गरियो, उसैको नमबाट स्थापित शिवलिङ्गको नाम राख्ने चलन उहिले पनि थियो र अहिले पनि हुँदछ । यसै नियमले अनुपरमका नामले स्थापना गरिएका शिवजीको नाम अनुपरमेश्वर राखेको देखिन्छ । यसबाट आमीरीका पति अनुपरम रहेछन् भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन आउँछ । यसको केही समय पूर्व प्रौढ प्राञ्जल व्यासस्तुति लेखेर सत्यनारायण-का अघाडि गरुडध्वज स्थापना गर्ने अनुपरम यिनै हुन् भन्ने तथ्य यसबाट प्रकट हुन्छ ।

यसरी विचार गर्दा अनुपरमका

बाबु परमामिमानी

पत्नी आमीरी

ह्योरा माँमगुप्त भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट हुन आउँछ ।

अंशुवर्मा-पछि शासन गर्ने जिष्णुगुप्तले केवलपुरको शिलालेखमा माँमगुप्तलाई हाम्रा बाजे (अस्मत्पितामह)^{१४} भनेका हुनाले नेपालमा शासन गर्ने गुप्तखलकमा एक मूर्धन्य अनुपरम थिए भन्ने सिद्ध हुन्छ । आमीरीले आफूलाई गोमी भनेकी र पछि जिष्णुगुप्तले पनि धानकोटको एउटा शिलालेखमा आफ्ना जेठा बूढा बाजेलाई मानगुप्त गोमी (अस्मज्जेष्ठप्रपितामह मान-गुप्त गोमी)^{१५} भनेर लेखेकाले यिनको वंश गोमी थियो भन्ने कुरामा निःसन्देह हुन्छ । तथा अंशुवर्मापछि कैलासकूट भवनमा बसी शासन गर्ने जिष्णुगुप्त जिष्णुगुप्तहरू पनि अनुपरमकै सन्तान देखिन्छन् । गोमीको शब्दिक अर्थ गाई पाल्ने घेरै गाई गोठ भएको भन्ने हुन्छ^{१६} । पछि हुँदै जाँदा थरमा यो शब्द रूढ हुन आयो । लिच्छविकालमा गोमी थर भएका मानिस-को बाहुल्य नेपालमा थियो । गोमी यो कुनै जातिको थर नभएर वर्गकै थर भएको देखिन्छ । गोमी थर भएका ब्राह्मणहरू पनि त्यस वेला थिए ।

वि.सं. ५८७ को पशुपतिको शिलालेखमा पुण्यगोमी ब्राह्मणको उल्लेख आएको छ^{१७} । त्यस्तै घोपाटनको नरेन्द्रदेवका पालाको अभिलेखमा शालङ्का वस्ने विश्वसेन ब्राह्मणकी पत्नी सुवर्णी गोमिनीको (शालङ्का वास्तव्य-ब्राह्मण- विश्वसेनस्य पत्न्या सुवर्णीगोमिन्या)^{१८} उल्लेख पाइन्छ ।

यस-अतिरिक्त लिच्छवि बाहेक शासकका पदमा आउने गुप्तवंशी शासकको थर गोमी भएको र यिनीहरू दोत्रीवर्गमा परेका पनि देखिन्छन् ।

अशुवर्माका भानिज योगवर्मा गोमी सामन्त चन्द्रवर्मा गोमी तथा गुप्त नामान्त धारी शासक मानगुप्त भौमगुप्त जिष्णुगुप्त विष्णुगुप्त गोमीवंशका दात्रिय थिए भन्ने कुरा स्पष्ट देखिन्छ । अरु गोमी थर भएका व्यक्तिहरू अभिलेखमा प्रशस्त छन् । तिनमारुद्रचन्द्र गोमी लच्छा गोमी महाराज विप्रवर्मा गोमी देशवर्मा गोमीहरूको नाम लिन सकिन्छ । यस अतिरिक्त शूद्रका रूपमा पनि गोमी थिए भन्ने कुरा आभीरीले हामीलाई बताउँछिन् ।

आभीर जाति -

यहाँनै आभीरको बारेमा अलिकति विचार गर्नु प्रसङ्गमिल्दो होला ।

आभीर एक जनजातिको रूपमा प्रसिद्धि पाएको ज्यादै पुरानो जाति हो । यसको आगमनविषयमा विद्वान्हरूको मतभिन्नता भएपनि ऐतिहासिक कालमा आएर यिनको प्रसार धेरै भएको देखियो । आभीरको घना आवादी भएको मूल थलो भारतको पश्चिम राजपुताना थियो^{१९} । यिनको मुख्य पेशा गाई वस्तु पाल्ने (पाशुपाल्य) भएको^{२०} हुनाले यिनले आफूलाई यादवकै हारमा राखेका छन् । यही जातिको मुख्य धर्म कृष्णाश्रयी वैष्णव हो । कृष्णको जन्म पनि पाशुपाल्य पेशा भएका^{२१} यादव वंशमा भएकोले आभीरहरूले पनि यादवलाई समानधर्म मानेका छन् । वैष्णव धर्म यिनको मुख्य धर्म भएकोले जहाँसुकै रहँदा बस्ता बसाई सदैँ जाँदा पनि यिनले आफ्नो धर्म र पेशा अपनाएकै छन् । यो धेरै प्रसिद्धि पाएको पुरानो जाति भएकोले यसको भाषा पनि अलग थियो । अधिका आचार्यले भाषाको वर्गीकरण गर्दा आभीरी प्राकृतको पनि बारंबार चर्चा गरेका छन्^{२२} ।

धार्मिक ग्रन्थ-अनुसार किरात हुँदा खस यवनहरूकै पढ्छु किमा आभीर पनि पर्छन्^{२३} । यस्ता धेरै जनजातिलाई मनुले कर्म नचलेका ब्राह्मण दात्रिय जातिमा गणना गरेका छन्^{२४} । आभीरको उत्पत्ति मनुले यसरी देखाएका छन् । ब्राह्मणबाट वैश्यको कुरीमा जन्मेका सन्तान अम्बष्ठ हुन्छ । त्यही अम्बष्ठको कुरीमा ब्राह्मणबाट जन्मेको सन्तान आभीर हुन आउँछ^{२५} ।

यसरी आभीरको उत्पत्ति बताए पनि ऐतिहासिक कालदेखि यो जनजाति भारतको पश्चिम राजपुतानातिर रहँदै गएको पाइएको छ । आभीरको आवादी भएको देश पनि आभीर कहलाएको थियो । द्वारका-पूर्व कुरुदेशपश्चिम सौवीर नजीकै आभीर देश थियो^{२६} । मालवगण यौधेयगणको जस्तै आभीरको पनि त्यहाँ गणराज्य थियो । आभीर देश उता भएपनि

ऐतिहासिक कालमा यिनको फैलावट उत्तर भारतका साथै नेपालमा पनि पाइएको छ ।

वर्तमान कालमा तराईमा आमीरहरू दश थरी पाइन्छन् । अलिक ऊचो नीचोका भेदले वर्गीकृत भएका विभिन्न रूपले तराईमा बसोबासो गरेका छन् । त्यहाँ आपसमा थोरै भेद लिए पनि यादव गुहार अहिरहरूको ठूलो वर्ग रहेको छ । यी सबैको मुख्य धर्म वैष्णव हो । यही वैष्णव धर्ममा दीक्षाित भएका यिनीहरू आफूलाई दास भन्छन्, तुलसी कंठी बाँध्छन्, माकामासु खाँदैनन् । नेपालदून (नेपाल उपत्यका) र आसपासमा पनि ग्वाको रूपमा रहेका ग्वाला (गोपाल) जातिको सत्ता पाइरहेको छ । तर यिनले चाहिँ आफ्नो पूर्वजाली धर्म सोझै आना अंगालिराखेका छैनन् । जीवनवृत्तिको लागि पाशुपाल्य पेशा चाहिँ छाडिहालेका छैनन् ।

नेपालको वंशावलीमा नेपालमा पहिलो शासन गर्नेमा गोपाल (आमीर) जातिकै राजाहरूको नाम लेखिएको पाइन्छ^{२७} । पछि आएर लिच्छवि कालमा फेरि आमीरहरूको ठूलो राजनैतिक उत्थान भएको पाउँछौं । आफ्नो बुद्धिकल र बाहुकले गर्दा आमीरहरूले लिच्छवि राजाको संगसंगै उपराजको स्थान लिन पुगेका थिए^{२८} ।

भारतमा धेरै पहिलेदेखि नै आमीरले राजनैतिक उच्चता प्राप्त गरेको प्रमाण पाइन्छ । वि.सं. २३८ को शक राजा रुद्रदामाका छोरा रुद्रसिंहको पालाको गोण्डा राजकोटको एक शिलालेखमा सेनापति बप्पक आमीर सेनापति रुद्रभूति आमीरको उल्लेख पाइन्छ^{२९} ।

आन्ध्र प्रदेशमा रहेको राजा वसुसेनको संवत् ३० (वि.सं. ३३५) को शिलालेखले आमीरको शक्ति र महत्त्वलाई व्यक्त गर्छ । यस अभिलेखमा पनि सुहृमा भगवान् नारायणको नमस्कार गरेर उठान गरिएको छ^{३०} । यसले पनि त्यस बेला यिनको वैष्णव धर्म प्रतिको आस्थालाई व्यक्त गर्छ ।

गुप्तसम्राट् समुद्रगुप्त (वि.सं. ३८७-४३२) ले मालव याधेय माद्रक सनकानिक आदि नौ गण जातिका साथमा आमीरगणको पनि उल्लेख गरेका छन् । यी गण जातिको संघशासन चल्दथ्यो । यी सबैले आफूलाई मानेको कुरा पनि उनले लेखेका छन्^{३१} ।

यसै ताकाका दक्षिण भारतका कदम्बवंशी राजा मयूर शर्मा (अं. ३८७-४१७) ले पनि आमीर गणलाई आफ्नो वश पारेको कुरा लेखेका छन्^{३२} ।

प्राचीन कालमा आमीर आदि सम्पूर्ण जनजातिलाई र भारत बाहिरका यवन जातिलाई समेत वैष्णव धर्मको ढोका खुला भएको प्रमाण प्रशस्त पाइन्छ^{३३} । यो सिद्धान्त मात्रै होइन, धार्मिक व्यवहारको प्रक्रियामा पनि यसले स्थान पाएको थियो । यवन हुँदा खस आमीरहरूले पनि हिन्दू धर्म वा वैष्णव धर्म स्वीकार गरेर आफूलाई शुद्धतामा उच्चतामा पुर्‍याएका थिए । उदाहरणको लागि हेलियोदर यवनलाई देखाउन सकिन्छ । उनी यवनराज अन्तिलिकितका दूत बनी शुङ्गराजा मागधद्रु कहाँ आएका थिए । उनले मागधव धर्म (वैष्णव धर्म) स्वीकार गरेर गरुडस्तम्भ पनि स्थापना गरेका थिए^{३४} ।

यसरी प्राचीनसमयमा भारतमा नेपालमा पनि विभिन्न जनजाति बाहिरबाट आएका यवन आदि जाति पनि धन मान ज्ञानले र हिन्दू धर्मको स्वीकारले पनि आर्य हिन्दू जातिमा विस्तारै धुलमिल हुँदै आइरहेका थिए^{३४} ।

अनुपरम र आभीर

नेपालमा म आभीरी हुं भनेर स्पष्टसँग घोषणा गर्ने माँमगुप्तकी आमा अनुपरमकी पत्नी देखिन्छिन् । अमरकोषका अनुसार आभीरीको अर्थ महाशूद्रा भन्ने हुन्छ । शूद्रकी स्वास्नी भन्दा चाहिँ शूद्रा हुन्छ र शूद्रकी छोरी अर्थात् शूद्र जातकी भन्दा शूद्रा रूप हुन्छ । परन्तु आभीरकी स्वास्नी भन्दा र आभीरकी छोरी भन्दा पनि आभीरी नै रूप वन्ने कुरा अमरकोषमा लेखिएको छ^{३६} । यसबाट माँमगुप्तकी आमा आभीरी आभीरकी पत्नी पनि हुन सकिन्छ, आभीरकी छोरी पनि हुन सकिन्छ । उनले आफूलाई परमामिमानीका छोराकी पत्नी आभीरी शील गुणले युक्त भएकी भनेकीले आभीरकी छोरीलाई अनुपरमले विवाह गरेका थिए भन्ने अनुमान हुन्छ । यस आधारमा यहाँनेर मलाई एउटा कुरो भन्न उत्सुकता लागिरहेको- ले सो पाठकका सामु प्रकट गर्ने लागिरहेछु । यद्यपि यो कुरो स्पष्ट पार्ने त्यति प्रबल ऐतिहासिक प्रमाण नभएपनि पूर्वाधार विचार गर्दै अनुसन्धानको बाटोमा जाँदा यसको धेरै संभाव्यता प्रकट हुन आउँछ भन्ने मेरो आशा छ ।

अनुपरमले बनाएको स्तोत्र पढ्दा अनुपरम एक वेदान्ती वैदिक धर्मका कट्टर पक्षापाती बौद्ध धर्मका विरोधी विद्वान्, कवि थिए भन्ने कुरा हामीलाई ज्ञान हुन्छ । उनले व्यासको स्तुति बनाए । व्यासलाई चौबीसवटा नारायणका अवतारमध्ये एक अवतार मानेको हुनाले विष्णुका अवतारका रूपमा अनुपरमले व्यास पूजा गरेका थिए । व्यासले अठाइ पर्व महामारत बनाए । सो महामारतलाई अफ सँवर्द्धन गरी लोकमा प्रचार प्रसार गर्ने श्रेय वैशम्पायनलाई छ । वैशम्पायनले राजा जनमेजयलाई यो महामारत सबै सुनाएका थिए । यसैले वैशम्पायनको पनि पूजा प्रचलित भयो । वि.सं. ५८७ मा विप्रसेन ध्रुवसेन वृद्धिसेन वेद भट्टहरूले वैशम्पायनको पूजा गर्ने गुठी समेत राखेका छन्^{३७} । यी सबै वैदिक याज्ञिक ब्राह्मण थिए । इत्यादि कुरा विचार गर्दा हाम्रा मनमा व्यासको स्तोत्र बनाई गरुडध्वज स्थापना गर्ने हाम्रा अनुपरम पनि वैदिक वेदान्ती गोमी ब्राह्मण थिए भन्ने अनुमान हुन आउँछ । उनले आभीरी पत्नी बिहे गरेर उनबाट जन्मेका माँमगुप्तहरू गोमी दौत्रिय थिए भन्ने कुरा पनि अनुमान गर्न सकिन्छ ।

त्यस्ता कट्टर वैदिक ब्राह्मण वा दौत्रीले महाशूद्रा पत्नी कसरी बिहे गर्दथे भन्ने शंका पनि जटिल हैन । वैदिक याज्ञिकहरूलाई अनुलोभ विवाह गर्ने छुट वैदिक कालदेखि थियो । मनुले पनि ब्राह्मणलाई चार वर्णकै कन्या विवाह गर्ने अनुमति दिएका छन्^{३८} । यो प्रथा लोकमा पनि अखिलेसम्म प्रचलितै छ । गोरखामा द्रव्य शाहको विजय गराउन उनलाई गोरखा गद्दीमा बसाउन प्रबल सहायता गर्ने गणेश पाँडे उपाध्याय ब्राह्मण थिए । पछि उनको सन्तानमा

प्रसिद्धिमा आएका कालु पाण्डे दामोदर पाण्डे तुलाराम पाण्डेहरू सश-दोत्री भए । यस्ता उदाहरण नेपालमा घरघरै पाइन्छन् ।

त्यस कारण वैदिक ब्राह्मण वा दोत्री अनुपरम गोमीले शूद्र आभीरकी छोरी बिहे गर्न कुनै अट्को थिएन । यो अहिले सानो सम्भावना व्यक्त गरेको हुँ, यसका अरु पक्का प्रमाण नपाउन्जेल यो मेरो सम्भावनाले विद्वान्लाई त्यतातिर घोरिन कर लाउनेछ ।

भौमगुप्त र धार्मिक समन्वय

यहाँ अर्को एउटा कुरा पनि चाख लाग्दो छ । नेपालमा प्रसिद्ध लिच्छवि राजा मानदेवका प्रपितामह वृषदेव बौद्ध धर्मानुयायी भएका थिए^{३६} । राजा मानदेव आफू वैष्णव थिए उनका जहान र भारादार शैव पनि थिए । मानदेव पक्षिका अनुपरम कट्टर वैष्णव भएर निस्कें । आफूमात्रै वैष्णव नभएर वैष्णव धर्मको प्रचार र बौद्ध मतको खण्डन पनि यिनले गरे । बौद्धहरूलाई यिनी निकै आक्षेप पनि गर्न पुगेका छन् । परन्तु यिनका शेषपक्षि यिनकै पत्नी आभीरी चाहिँ शिवलिङ्ग स्थापना गरेर यिनको पुण्य वढाउने र छोरा सन्तानको आयु आरोग्यको पनि कामना गर्किन् । त्यस कारण अनुपरममा जस्तो बौद्धपट्टि तिरस्कारको भावना थियो शैव धर्ममा त्यति थिएन भन्ने स्पष्ट छ ।

यसपछि भौमगुप्तले भने बाबुको वैष्णव धर्म र आमाको शैव धर्मसँगै अंगालेको देखिन्छ । यद्यपि भौमगुप्तको छुट्टै अभिलेख उनले स्थापना गरेका देव-देवता फेला परेका छैनन् । तर पनि उनका पालामा उनलाई सर्वैसर्वा मान्ने उनका एक जना अनुयायी कर्मचारी स्वामीवाक्ते आधा शिव आधा विष्णुबाट बनेको श्यामगौर-आधा काला विष्णु आधा सेता शिव भएको एउटै शङ्करनारायणको मूर्ति बनाएर स्थापना गरेबाट भौमगुप्तको विचार वैष्णव धर्म र शैव धर्ममा एक रूपता ल्याउने थियो भन्ने बुझिन्छ^{४०} । भौमगुप्तको अन्तिम समय वि.सं. ६४७ को विष्णुपादुकाको शिवदेवले, भौमगुप्तसँग मिलेर स्थापना गरेको अभिलेखमा विष्णु र शिवको स्तुति कुँदिएको हुँदा भौमगुप्तको धर्मसमन्वयको सिद्धान्त स्पष्ट हुन्छ^{४१} ।

नेपालमा बौद्ध धर्मलाई नास्तिक धर्म भनी यसलाई यसरी आक्षेप गर्नेमा पहिला अनुपरम देखिन्छन् । यसपछि यो भाव प्रबल भएको पाइँदैन । शैव र वैष्णवमा पनि यस्तै आक्षेप प्रत्याक्षेप हुन्थ्यो । यो अन्यत्रबाट पनि थाहा हुन्छ । 'संसारमा मानिसहरूको भिन्दा-भिन्दै देवतामा भक्तिभाव छ, त्यसमा पनि पद्मापातमा लागेर भ्रम जालमा परेका ती मानिसहरूको भ्रम हटाउन यी दुई देवताको एउटै रूप लिएको मूर्ति स्थापना गरिएको'^{४२} भन्ने स्वामीवाक्तेको यस वाक्यबाट पनि थाहा हुन्छ । यसरी शैव वैष्णव धर्मलाई एउटै रूप देखाउने भौमगुप्तको यो प्रयास राजनैतिक धार्मिक र सामाजिक तीनै रूपले तुलना गर्न सकिन्छ र उनको यो कार्य प्रशंसनीय थियो । साथै उनका लागि अपरिहार्य पनि थियो ।

यसै सम्बन्धमा यहाँ अर्को कुरा पनि स्मरणीय छ । भौमगुप्त पक्षिका शासक अंशुवर्मा परमशैव थिए । तर उनले अरु सबै धर्मावलम्बीहरूमा समान व्यवहार गरेको थिए । उनले आफू शैव भएपनि अरु कुनै धर्मलाई पछापात गरेको उदाहरण पाइँदैन । शैव वैष्णव बौद्ध धर्ममा यिनले कति भेदभाव देखाएनन् । कुनै जाति विशेषलाई पनि उनले प्रश्रय दिएको देखिँदैन । अंशुवर्माभन्दा पहिलेका शासनाभिलेखमा प्रायः ब्राह्मण लगायत प्रजालाई सम्बोधन गरिन्थ्यो । अंशुवर्मापछि भने प्रधान लगायत ग्रामवासीलाई सम्बोधन गरेका छन् । अंशुवर्मापछि फेरि गुप्तहरूको हातमा शासनाधिकार गयो । गुप्त आभीरहरू प्रबल वैष्णव धर्मका समर्थक थिए । जिष्णुगुप्तहरूले अनुपरम भौमगुप्तका कीर्तिलाई अफ विस्तृत पारेर बढाए । अरु धर्म सम्प्रदायहरूमा अनास्था चाहिँ जगाएनन् ।

वि.सं. ७०० करीबमा लिच्छवि राजा नरेन्द्रदेवले गुप्तहरूलाई हटाएर स्वयं हर्षकीर्ति बन्न सफल भए । यसै वेलाको उनको यडभालहिटीको एक शिलालेखमा आफ्ना पुर्खाले राखेको धर्मकीर्तिलाई भौमगुप्तले विलोप गरेको र उनले त्यसको पुनः प्रतिष्ठापन गरेको कुरा अङ्कित गराएका छन् । 'हाम्रा पुर्खाले मानेश्वरमा रहेको भुवनेश्वर देवालयलाई केही गाउँ वित्ती दिएर त्यसको आम्दानीले सो देवालयको जगेनी गरी भोग गर्ने दक्षिणाकोलीग्रामको ढडभालाई दिएको थियो, के कारणले हो भौमगुप्तले सो खोसेर रैकर गराएका रहेछन्, पुरानो स्थिति मर्यादा पालना गर्ने मन भएको हुनाले र प्रजाको सधैं कल्याण पनि हुने हुँदा अहिले फेरि यो अधिकार मैले त्यही, ढडभालाई सुम्पेको छु' ४३ ।

यसबाट नरेन्द्रदेवले आफ्ना बापवैरी गुप्तहरूको खोट देखाएर आफू जनप्रिय बन्ने कार्य गरेका भए पनि भौमगुप्तले भुवनेश्वरको गूठी जगा रैकर गराएको कुरा गौर गर्न योग्य छ । यद्यपि यो जगा अधिग्रहण गर्ने उनलाई राजनैतिक कारण पन्थो होला । तरपनि उनको यो काम अधिका लिच्छवि राजाको कीर्ति लोप हुने र पक्षिका उनका वंशजको पनि वित्त दुख्ने नै थियो । यसैले नरेन्द्रदेवले यसको पुनः प्रत्यावर्तन गरेर आफ्नो दाक्षिण्य प्रकट गरेका छन् । भौमगुप्तले जुनसुकै दृष्टिले यो गूठ हरेका भएपनि शैव धर्म प्रति उनको कटाक्षलाई यसले सिद्ध गर्दछ नै । उनले लिच्छवि राजाको शैव गूठ हरे तापनि धर्ममा सन्तुलन विगारेका चाहिँ थिएनन् । यसैले उनका अनुयायी दुवै धर्ममा सामञ्जस्य ल्याउने कार्यमा लागेका थिए । लिच्छवि र गुप्तको संयुक्त-शासन चलाउने शैव र वैष्णव धर्ममा एक रूपता ल्याएर यी दुवै मतावलम्बीहरूका मतभेदलाई कम गर्ने उनले जो प्रयास गरे, त्यस वेलाको उनको यो कार्य समयोचित थियो । लिच्छवि र गुप्त दुवै राज कुलको प्रशासकको सन्तुलनवाट भएको शासन सुधारले र दुवै धर्मको सम्मेलनले नै त्यस वेला नेपालमा समृद्धि ल्याएको थियो भन्न सकिन्छ ।

उपसंहार -

यसरी लिच्छविकालको धार्मिक सामाजिक स्थिति तिर सरसर्ती नजर लाउँदा राजा प्रजाहरूको एक-न एक धर्म सम्प्रदायमा अभिनिवेश भए पनि अरु धर्म प्रति अनास्था गर्ने अरु सम्प्रदायलाई तिरस्कार गर्ने प्रवृत्ति चाहिँ पाईदैन । अनुपरमले जो बौद्धहरू प्रति हीन भाव देखाए, त्यो उनको दार्शनिक विचारबाट प्रेरित भावना थियो । उनी विद्वान् थिए । विद्वत्ताले विपद्दाको मतलाई खण्डन गर्ने उनको लक्ष्य थियो । बौद्ध मत नास्तिक मतका रूपले कहलाएको र ब्रह्मसूत्रमा बौद्ध दर्शनको खण्डन पनि पौकाले ब्रह्मसूत्रका आधारमा बौद्ध मतलाई तिरस्कार र बौद्धहरूलाई आक्षेप गर्ने अनुपरम अधि सरे । उनी वेदान्त दर्शनमा पोख्त थिए । स्वमत-स्थापना र परमत-खण्डन उनको लक्ष्य हो । उनले जे देखे जाने बुझेका थिए, सो भने । आफ्नो विद्वद्-हृदय प्रकट गरे । भौमगुप्तले बाबुको विचारधारामा केही परिवर्तन गरे । शैव र वैष्णव धर्ममा सामञ्जस्य ल्याउनु अर्थात् शिव र विष्णुमा केही फरक छैन, त्यस्तै लिच्छवि र गुप्त शासकमा पनि केही भेद छैन उस्तै हुन् भन्ने भावना लोकमा जगाउनु धर्ममा कलह उब्जन नदिनु पनि उनको उद्देश्य भएको बुझिन्छ । एक दुइ ठाउँमासानो-तिनो पक्षापात भएपनि यिनीहरूले धर्ममा कलह चाहिँ उब्जाउन दिएनन् । धर्म समन्वयको परम्परा कायम राखे । जे भए पनि मागवत धर्मको प्रतिष्ठा बढाउने वैष्णवको रूपमा ब्रह्मसूत्रको व्याख्याता दार्शनिकको रूपमा संस्कृत साहित्यको प्रगाढ पाण्डित्यवाला कविको रूपमा पनि अनुपरम नेपालका सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रथम विद्वान् ठहरिन्छन् ।

टिप्पणीहरू

१. ज्ञानमणि नेपाल, सम्राट् गृहपति, गोरखापत्र २०३५ असोज २१ गते शनिवासरौय परिशिष्टाङ्क ।
ज्ञानमणि नेपाल, सम्राट् गृहपतिको परिमाण्णा, उही - २०३५ कार्तिक ४ गते ७ वार ।
ज्ञानमणि नेपाल, गृहपति र वैदिक यज्ञ द्वादशाह, उही - २०३५ पुस २२ गते ७ वार ।
२. (दूरात्) स्मृतीनामगतेः श्रुतीनां, तदद्य लोके नियतं व्य (नश्यत्) ।
... शास्त्रे मनुयमबृहस्पत्युशनसां
... विधानं कृत्यानामसुगमपदं लोक (निमृत्तम्)

अनुपरमको हाडिगाउँको स्तम्भलेखबाट

धनवज्र वज्राचार्य-ज्ञानमणि नेपाल, संस्कृत-सन्देश

२ वर्ष १-२-३ संयुक्ताङ्क - १-१३ पृष्ठ

धनवज्र वज्राचार्य -

लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख १६० पृष्ठ

वर्णोत्तमा भूमिदेवास्मात्तशास्त्राणाम्

उही, ५७३-५७४ पृष्ठ

३. पाण्डवकादि व्यवहार प्रवर्त्तते, व्याकरणादि शास्त्र च (व) तैता, प्रवर्त्तते ।
(गोपालवंशावलीबाट) योगी नरहरिनाथ सम्पादित
हिमवत्संस्कृति १ वर्षी १ अङ्क ११ पृष्ठ
४. संस्कृत-सन्देश २ वर्षी १-२-३ संयुक्ताङ्क ६-१३ पृष्ठमा र लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख
१५८-६४ पृष्ठमा प्रकाशित
५. (नरैः) परान्नास्तिकताम्प्रपन्नैस्त्रयीविरोधेन निवार्यमाणः
(धर्मो) व्यवस्थास्यत नाथ लोके धर्ता त्वमस्या यदि नामविष्यः
त्रयी त्वयागाज्जगतिप्रतिष्ठान्त्वमेव
धर्मान् विविधानतिष्ठिपः
निराकृता कुमतिभिरहसावृतैः
कुतार्किकैः कथमपि सांगतादिभिः
त्रयी त्वयि प्रथितगिरि प्रभाविय
म्पयोनिधौ सरिदिव विन्दते स्थितिम्
अनुपरमको हांडिगाउँको स्तम्भलेखबाट
धनवज्र वज्राचार्य लि.का.अभिलेख १६० पृ.
६. ... भवजलधौ विवर्त्तमानान् रागादिप्रपतधियः
प्रगाढमोहान्
... स्यास्त्वमिति विधाय मुक्तिं मार्गं
साचीनाम्भूवि पुरुषाङ्कुरोणि मन्त्रे
उही
७. जगतो हिताय सुकृतेह भारते
भुवि वाङ्मयं सकलमेव दर्शितम् ।
उही
८. स्यादात्मानं न जातु त्वमिव कथयिता
कश्चिदन्यो द्वितीयः
उही ।
९. ... शास्त्रे मनुयमबृहस्पत्युशनसां
विधानं कृत्यानामसुगमपदं लोक
उही
१०. धनवज्र वज्राचार्य खपिहेको अभिलेख
लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख १३८ पृ.

११. पशुपतिको आभीरी गोमिनीको अभिलेख
रामजी तैवारी देवीप्रसाद मण्डारी शङ्करमान राजवंशी
संस्कृत-सन्देश २ वर्ष १-२-३ संयुक्ताङ्क १-२ पृ.
धनवज्र वज्राचार्य लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख १७०-७१ पृ.
१२. उही शिलालेखबाट
१३. वि.सं.६१४ को गणदेवको शिलालेखमा महाप्रतिहार सर्वदण्ड
नायकको रूपमा यी देखिन्छन् । उही १८२-८१ पृ.
वि.सं.६२४ को गङ्गादेवको अभिलेखमा पनि यिनी यही पदमा रहेका छन् ।
उही २०४-५ पृ.
वि.सं.६४७ को शिवदेवको शिलालेखमा पनि यही पदमा छन् । उही २१४-१५ पृ.
१४. लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख ४१४ पृ.
१५. उही ४३४ पृष्ठ
१६. गोमान् गोमी - १८२३ अमरकोश
१७. धनवज्र वज्राचार्य - लिच्छवि कालका अभिलेख १४१ पृ.
१८. उही - ४२२ पृ.
१९. 'पहिले आभीरहरू विनशनको नजीकै राजपुतानाको महभूमिमा रहन्थे, पछि सिन्धु
उपत्यकाको दक्षिणमा र अपरान्त (उत्तर कोङ्कण) मा पनि पुगेका थिए' ।
दीनेशचन्द्र सरकारको 'सेलेक्ट इन्स्कृप्सन्स' द्वि.सं.१८२ पृ.
२०. जङ्गलमा गाई गोठ पालेका लौरो हातमा लिएका आभीरलाई गोपाल भनेर विष्णु-
पुराणमा लेखिएको छ ।
(५ अं.३८ अध्याय विष्णुपुराण)
२१. न वयं कृषिकर्तारो वाणिज्याजीविनो न च ।
गावो ऽ स्मद्देवतं तात वयं वनचराः यतः । ५।१०।२६
न द्वारबन्धावरणाः न गृहदोत्रिणास्तथा ।
सुखिनस्त्वखिले लोके यथा वै चक्रचारिणः ५।१०।३३
विष्णुपुराण
(कृष्णको उक्ति) 'हामी खेतीपाती पनि गर्दैनौं, बन्द व्यापार पनि हाम्रो छैन ।
हाम्रा धौता गाई नै हुन्, बा, किनभने हामी जङ्गली (गोठाला) हौं । हाम्रा न
घरद्वार छन्, न वारभित्ता ओत छन्, न घरवारी नै छन् । गाढामा चढेर हिड्यो,
जहाँ रात पर्छ त्यहीँ बस्यो, यस्ता मुनि जस्ता दुनियाँमा हामी सुखी हौं' ।

२२. अहीरको होस् आभीरी चाण्डाली पुक्कसादिको ।
आभीरी शाबरी होउन् काष्ठपात्रोपजीविको ॥६॥१६३
‘साहित्यदर्पण’ कोमलनाथ अधिकारीको अनुवाद १४७ पृ.
२३. किरातहूणान्प्रपुलिन्दपुल्कसा आभीरकड्का यवनाः खशादयः २।४।१८ भागवत.
१४. फल्लो मल्लश्च राजन्याद् ब्रात्यान्निच्छिविरेव च ।
नटश्च करणाश्चैव खशो द्रविड एव च ॥
१०।२२ मनु
२५. ब्राह्मणाद्वैश्यकन्यायामम्बष्ठो नाम जायते ।१०।८
आभीरोऽम्बष्ठकन्यायाम्..... १०।१५ मनु
पतञ्जलिले आभीरजातिलाई विशेष शूद्रका रूपमा लेखेका छन् ।१।२।३।७२ महाभाष्य
२६. मरुधन्वमतिक्रम्य सौवीराभीरयोः परान् ।
आनर्त्तान् मार्गवोपागाच्छ्रान्तवाहो मनाग् विमुः ॥
१।१०।१५ भागवत
२७. योगी नरहरिनाथ-सम्पादित - गोपालवंशावली, हिमवत्संस्कृति
१ वर्षी १ अड्क ६ पृ.
२८. स्वामी वाक्ले भौमगुप्तलाई ‘परमदेवत श्रीभौमगुप्तपाद’ भनेर लेखेका छन् । (संस्कृत सन्देश-१।८ लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख १६८ पृ.) ध्रुवदेवसँग मिलेर शासन गर्ने जिष्णुगुप्तले आफूलाई ‘प्रजाको हित गर्ने, असल कुलपरम्पराबाट राज्याधिकार पाएका, सबै शहरियाले शासन मन पराएका’ (प्रजाहितैषी...पुण्यान्वयादागतराज्यसम्पत् समस्तपौरार्चितशासन’ (लि.का.अभिलेख ४०१ पृ.) भनेर लेखेका छन् । अर्का ठाउँमा उनले आफूलाई ‘जहाँ तहीं पाउन नसकिने राज-गुणले पृथ्वी मण्डल उज्यालो पारेका’ ‘असुलभनृपतिगुणावभासितसकल महीमण्डल’ (लि.का.अ.४१६ पृ.) राजाको गुण ऐश्वर्यले सिंगारिएका (‘नरपतिगुणसम्पद्भूषित’ उही ४२३ पृ.) भनी लेखेका छन् । प्रनर्दन प्राणकौशिकले आफ्नो लेखमा लिच्छवि राजाको नाम नलिई जिष्णुगुप्तको बढिरहेको विजयराज्यमा (‘जिष्णुगुप्तस्य प्रवर्द्धमान-विजयराज्ये’ (उही ४२६ पृ.) । जिष्णुगुप्तले देश र जनताको पालना गरेको वेला (‘पाति गुणानुरदितातजने श्रीजिष्णुगुप्ते महीं’ (उही ४२६ पृ.) भनी लेखेका छन् ।
२९.आभीरेण सेनापति-बप्पकस्य पुत्रेण सेनापति-रुद्रभूतिना ग्रामे रसोपद्रवके वापी खानिता....
दीनेशचन्द्र सरकारको सेलेक्ट इन्स्कृपसन्स द्वि.सं.१८२ पृष्ठ
जयचन्द्र विद्यालङ्कारको भा.इ.उन्मीलन पं.सं.१६६ पृ.

३०. नमो भगवते देवपरमदेवाय पुराणपुराणाय नारायणाय, राज्ञः वासिष्ठीपुत्रस्य
आभीरस्य वसुष्ठास्य संवत्सरे ३० व (षाँ) प (दो) ३ दिवसे १ --- उही ५२५ पृ.
३१. ...मालवाज्जुनायन - यौधेय-माद्रका-भीर-प्राज्जुन-सनकानीक-काक-खरपारकरादि-
मिश्र सर्व्वकरदानाज्ञाकरण प्रणामागमन-परितोषित-प्रचण्डशासनस्य, उही २६६ पृ.
‘संवतः यस वेला आभीरहरू अपरान्त (उत्तरकोड्कूण) मा रहन्थे’ दी.च. सरकार
‘सेलेक्ट इन्स्कृप्सन्स’ २६६ पृ.
३२. मैसूरको राजा मयूरशर्माको अभिलेख, उही ४७३ पृष्ठ
विष्णुपुराणमा एक ठाउँमा सात आभीर राजाले राज्य गरे मन्ने उल्लेख पाइन्छ ।
सप्तभीरप्रभृतयो दश गर्दमिलाश्च भूमजो भविष्यन्ति ४।२४।५१ विष्णुपुराण
आभीरलाई शुद्धको श्रेणीमा राखेर आभीर देशमा तिनको आधिपत्य भएको
कुरा पनि त्यहाँ अर्का ठाउँमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ ।
सौराष्ट्रावन्तिशूद्राभीरान्मैदामूविषयाश्च
ब्रात्यद्विजाभीरशूद्राद्या मोक्षयन्ति ।४।२४।६८ उही
३३. किरातहूणान्भ्रपुलिन्द पुलकसा आभीरकड्को यवनाः सशादयः
येन्येवपापाः यदुपाश्रयाश्रयाच्छुध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रमविष्णावे नमः
२।४।१८ भागवत
‘किरात हूण आन्भ्र पुलिन्द पुलकस आभीर कड्को यवन सश आदि जातिहरू र अरु
अरु पापी पनि कृष्णाका मत्तको आश्रयबाट शुद्ध हुन्छन्’ ।...
३४. देवदेवस्य वासुदेवस्य गरुडध्वजः अयं कारितः इह हेलियोदोरेण भागवतेन दियस्य
पुत्रेण तादाशिलाकेन यवनदूतेन आगतेन महाराजस्य अन्तिलिखितस्य उपान्तात्
सकाशं राज्ञः काशीपुत्रस्य भागमद्रस्य ब्रातुः वर्षेण चतुर्दशेन राज्येन वर्द्धमानस्य
त्रीणि अमृतपदानि इह स्वनुष्ठितानि नयन्ति स्वर्गं- दमः त्यागः अप्रमादः ॥
विदिशा (भिल्सा) मध्यप्रदेशको
स्तम्भलेख, सेलेक्ट इन्स्कृप्सन्स ८६ पृ.
३५. मनुले धेरै जन जातिलाई ब्रात्यगणमा परिगणन गरेका छन् । श्रौतसूत्र ग्रन्थमा
यिनलाई शुद्ध पार्ने यज्ञको विधान पाइन्छ । यस्ता यज्ञ ब्रात्यस्तोम वा गणायज्ञ कहि-
न्थे । यस्ता यज्ञ गरेर यिनीहरूको शुद्धीकरण गरिन्थ्यो । ब्रात्यस्तोमेनेष्ट्रा
ब्रात्यमावाद्धिरमेयुः (२४।४।२६ का.श्री.सू.) ‘ब्रात्यस्तोम वा गणायज्ञ गरेर ब्रात्य-
मावबाट छुट्छन्’ । पाणिनिको ‘श्रेण्यादयः कृतादिभिः २।१।५६ मन्ने सूत्रको उदाह-
रणबाट पनि शुद्ध गरिएका बाहुन दौत्रीको संकेत मिल्दछ । यद्यपि ब्रात्यस्तोमको
सामग्री मगधदेशका ब्राह्मणलाई दिनु भनिएकोले व्यवहारमा यिनलाई उच्चजातिले
लिन गर्छन् मान्थे, तर पनि ‘व्यवहार्या भवन्ति’ (२२।४।३० का.श्री.सू.)

‘ततस्ते ब्रात्या ब्रात्यस्तोमानुष्ठानेन व्यवहार्याः’ (कुन्दोगसूत्र) शिष्टमोजनव्यवहार-
योग्या भवन्ति (देवयाजिक)

‘ब्रात्यस्तोम गरेपछि ब्रात्यहरू वेद पढ्न शिष्ट (उच्च वर्ग)सँग खान पान बिहाबारीमा
चल्ल योग्य हुन्छन्’ भनेबाट कानूनी रूपमा यिनको शिष्टता मानिन्थ्यो ।

३६. शूद्रीशूद्रस्य भार्या स्याच्छूद्रा तज्जातिरेव च ।

आभीरी तु महाशूद्री जातिपुयोगयोः समा ॥

१०६६-११०० अमरकोश

‘शूद्रकी स्वास्नी भन्दा शूद्री हुन्छ । शूद्र जाति भन्दा शूद्रा रूप बन्दछ’ ।

‘आभीरी, महाशूद्री २ ग्वालाकी स्त्रीका नाम (कुलचन्द्रको टीका)

‘(‘आभीरकी स्वास्नी भन्दा वा आभीर जातकी स्त्री भन्दा पनि एकै नासका रूप
हुन्छन्’) ।

रतिमानु सिंहको प्रा. भारतका राजनैतिक एवं सांस्कृतिक इतिहास’ ४७५ पृष्ठ

३७. लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख, १३८ पृष्ठ

३८. अदामाला वसिष्ठेन संयुक्ताऽधमयोनिजा ।

शारङ्गो मन्दपालेन जगामाम्यहणीयताम् । ६।२३

एताअन्याश्रलोके ऽस्मिन्नपकृष्टप्रसूतयः ।

उत्कर्षं योषितः प्राप्ताः स्वेः स्वैर्मृगुणैः शुभैः ६।२४ मनु.

‘तल्लो जातमा जन्मेकी अदामाला वसिष्ठसँग र शारङ्गो मन्दपालसँग गएर उच्च
जातका भए । यीवाहेक तल्लो जातमा जन्मेका अरू स्त्रीपनि आफ्ना असल पतिका
गुणले गर्दा उपल्लो जातमा पुगेका छन्’ ।

ब्राह्मणश्यानुपूर्वेण चतस्त्रस्तु यदि स्त्रियः

तासां पुत्रेषु जातेषु विभागेऽयं विधिः स्मृतः ६।१४६ मनु

‘बाहुनका चारै जातका पत्नी भए भने तिनबाट जन्मेका छोराहरूको अश्वण्डा यसरी
गर्नु ।

जातो नार्यामनार्यायामार्यादार्यो भवेद्गुणैः १०।६४ मनु

आर्यबाट अनार्या स्त्रीमा जन्मेको सन्तान गुणले गर्दा आर्य हुन्छ’ ।

पौराणिक अनुश्रुति-अनुसार माई भन्दा पहिलेका राजा महापद्म नन्द शूद्राका गर्भबाट
जन्मेका थिए । चन्द्रगुप्त माईको कथा पनि यस्तै छ -

महानन्दिनस्ततश्शूद्रागर्भाद्भिवाऽ तिलाव्योऽ तिक्लो

महापद्मनामा परशुराम इवापरोऽ खिलदात्रान्तकारी

भविष्यति, ४।२४।२० विष्णुपुराण

कौटिल्य एव चन्द्रगुप्तमुत्पन्नं राज्येऽभिषेद्यति

४।२४।२८ विष्णुपुराण

मुद्राराक्षस नाटकमा रामचन्द्र शुक्लको मूमिका

१-२ पृष्ठ

३६. व्यायामसंदोषकृत् (लडाईं भिडाईं कम गर्ने) चांगुको स्तम्भलेखबाट ,
सुगतशासनपदापाती (बुद्धको मतमा लागेका) जयदेवको पशुपति अभिलेखबाट ,

४०. भिन्ने पुंसां जगति च तथा देवताभक्तिभावे
पदाग्राहभ्रमितमनसां पदाविच्छिन्तिहेतोः ।
इत्यर्धाम्यां समुपरवितं यन्मुरारीश्वराभ्या-
मेकं रूपं शरदिजघनश्यामगौरं तदव्यात्

(स्वामी वार्त्तिको अभिलेखबाट)

बाबुराम आचार्य नयराज पन्त

संस्कृत-सन्देश १।८

धनवज्र वज्राचार्य

लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख १६८।६६ पृ.

*संसारमा मानिसहरूको भिन्नाभिन्न देवतामा भक्तिभाव रहेको छ । पदापातमा
लागेर मनमा भ्रम परेका ती मानिसहरूको भ्रम हटाउनको लागि आधा शिव आधा
विष्णुको रूपले बनाइएको शरद् कृतुको बादल जस्तो श्यामलो र गोरो यो मूर्तिले
रक्षा गरौस्*

४१. लि.का.अ.२१४-१५ पृ.

४२. उही १६६ पृ.

४३. *दक्षिणाकोलीग्रामद्रष्टृस्य सर्वतलग्रामैः सहितस्य पूर्वराममिमाने
स्वरे भुवनेश्वरदेवकुलं यथाकल्पिताग्रहारादिप्रत्यायं पालनोपमा
गाय प्रतिपादितं केनापि हेतुना श्रीभूमगुप्तेनादिपुत्रं राजकुल
भोग्यमभूत्तदिदमधुना पूर्वमर्यादास्थितिप्रवर्त्तनाद्वतमनोभिः
सततञ्च प्रजानां श्रेयसेत्यैव सर्वतलग्रामसहितस्य दक्षिणाकोली
ग्रामद्रष्टृस्य तदेव भुवनेश्वरदेवकुलं... ..
सहितञ्च प्रतिमुक्तं...

लि.का.अ.४६४ पृ.

सन्दर्भ-सूची

१. अमरकोश; (पं. कुलचन्द्रकृत नेपाली टीका-सहित)
प्रकाशक:- पं. बालकृष्णाचार्य, यशोदा पुस्तकालय,
वाराणसी १ वि.सं.२०१७ ।
२. अष्टाध्यायीसूत्रपाठ; प्रकाशक:- चौखम्बा संस्कृत सीरिज अफिस वाराणसी,
ई.१९७६ ।
३. कात्यायन; श्रौतसूत्र, (देवयानिकपद्धतिसहित) प्रकाशक - चौखम्बा संस्कृत सीरिज
वाराणसी, ई.१९३३ ।
४. जयचन्द्र विद्यालंकार: भारतीय इतिहासका उन्मीलन, प्र- हिन्दी भवन, इलाहबाद,
तृ.संस्करण, ई.१९५६-५७ ।
५. दीनेशचन्द्र सरकार: एम.ए.पीएच.डी.सेलेक्ट इन्स्कृप्सन्स, प्र- कलकत्ता युनिवर्सिटी
द्वि.संस्करण, ई.१९६५ ।
६. धनवज्र वज्राचार्य; लिच्छविकालका अभिलेख, प्रकाशक- त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय, कीर्ति-
पुर वि.सं.२०३० ।
७. पतञ्जलि; व्याकरण-महामाष्य, प्र- हरयाणा साहित्य संस्थान गुरुकुल रोहतक,
वि.सं.२०२० ।
८. भागवत: प्रथम खण्ड, प्रकाशक-गीता प्रेस, गोरखपुर, पञ्चम संस्करण, वि.सं.२०२१ ।
९. मनुस्मृति: प्रकाशक- निर्णयसागर प्रेस बम्बई, पष्ठ संस्करण, ई.१९२० ।
१०. रतिमानुसिंह एम्.ए.डी.फिल: प्राचीन भारतका राजनैतिक एवं सांस्कृतिक इतिहास,
प्र.किताब महल, इलाहबाद, ई.१९७६ ।
११. वामन जयादित्य; काशिका, प्र.जयकृष्ण दास हरिदास गुप्त चौखम्बा संस्कृत सीरिज,
बनारस, वि.२००६ ।
१२. वासुदेवशरण अग्रवाल: पाणिनिकालीन भारतवर्ष, प्र. मोतीलाल बनारसीदास
नेपाली खपरा बनारस, वि.२०१२ ।
१३. विशारदवत्त: मुद्राराक्षस, (रामचन्द्रशुक्लको भूमिका हिन्दी अनुवादसहित) प्र.राम-
नारायणलाल बेनीमाधव कटरारोड, इलाहाबाद, तृ.संस्करण, ई.१९७६ ।
१४. विश्वनाथ: साहित्यदर्पण, (कोमलनाथ अधिकारीको नेपाली अनुवाद) प्र.रोयल
नेपाल एकेडेमी, काठमाडौं, वि.सं.२०२३ ।
१५. विष्णुपुराण; प्रकाशक-मोतीलाल जलान, गीता-प्रेस गोरखपुर, अष्टम संस्करण
वि.सं.२०३३ ।
१६. संस्कृत-सन्देश; मासिकपत्रिका (सं.योगी नरहरिनाथ र अरु) २ वर्षी १-२-३ संयुक्तानक
वि.सं.२०११ काठमाडौं ।

८४ सिं एन ए एस जर्नल

१७. हिमवत्संस्कृतिः (त्रैमासिकपत्रिका) (सं.पं.बुद्धिसागर पराजुली र अरु) १ वर्षी १ अंक
वि.सं.२०१६ काठमाडौं ।

१८. गोरखापत्रः ७८ वर्षी १५४ अंक २०३५।६।२१।७ (परिशिष्टांक)

७८ वर्षी १६६ अंक २०३५।७।४।७ ,;

७८ वर्षी २४१ अंक २०३५।६।२२।७ ,;



Book Review

Dixit, Hemang, ed., 1978. Medical Bibliography of Nepal. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University Institute of Medicine, Research and Review Division.

The Medical Bibliography of Nepal provides a comprehensive listing of books, articles and reports that cover a wide range of medical topics focussed on Nepal. The publication of this work comes at a very appropriate time, since an interest in Nepal's health problems and medical development has steadily increased in recent years.

The bibliography is clearly not confined to medical science alone, as the title might suggest, but also includes listings of works on topics ranging all the way from traditional medical beliefs to health care systems and health education. It appears that the editor/compiler took a great deal of time and work to collect and organize materials on any and all topics that might be relevant to the general subjects of health and medicine in Nepal. As a result, this work will be of use to individuals from a wide range of disciplines, including public health and medical anthropology, as well as to individuals working directly in the medical sciences in Nepal.

Entries are clearly organized and categorized. The bibliography is first divided into published books and booklets, unpublished articles, WHO assignment reports, and published articles. This is followed by a section of materials written in languages other than English and another section lists materials written in Nepal. The larger sections -- the WHO reports and the published articles -- are further divided by topic.

There are some minor shortcomings in the this work. For instance, it is not indexed and there is no indication as to where copies of some of the unpublished materials might be available.

These matters aside, the Medical Bibliography of Nepal will certainly become a very welcome resource work for a diversity of people and institutions. It is hoped that this valuable task of compiling and publishing a medical bibliography of Nepal will continue.

Linda Stone

Marc Gaborieau, Le Nepal et ses populations, Editions complexe, P.U.F. Bruxelles, 1978, pp. 312 maps, tables, photographs.

Over the past 12 years, Marc Gaborieau has contributed regularly and extensively to the accumulating literature of Himalayan ethnography. His various articles and books may be grouped into a definite, yet varied set of interests. First and foremost, he has acquainted us, with dedication and in detail, with the existence and the problems of a religious minority residing in the Kingdom of Nepal, that of the Muslims, who constitute approximately 3% of the total population.

Several essays -- like "Les Musulmans du Nepal" (in: Objets et Mondes 6, 2:1966); "Les Curate du Moyen Nepal" (in: L'Homme 6, 3:1966); "Muslims in the Hindu Kingdom of Nepal" (in: Contributions to Indian Sociology N.S. 6:1972) -- have led to two books on the subject: Recit du'un voyageur musulman au Tibet, Paris, 1973, and Minorites musulmanes dans le royaume hindou du Nepal, Paris, 1977, the former being mainly a translation of a travel account made by an Urdu-speaking Moslem through the Himalaya in 1882-3, which thus provided a sort of historical forerunner -- from the viewpoint of a concerned individual -- to the present day study by a learned anthropologist. Second in rank and extension have been Gaborieau's interests in Himalayan folklore. The antiquated undertone of this rubrique may be forgotten, if one reads what has been accomplished under it: first, two musicological essays, written in collaboration with a renowned student in this field, Mireille Helffer: "Problemes poses par un chant de Tihar" (in: Ethnographie, 1968-69) and "A propos d'un tambour de Kumaon et de l'ouest du Nepal" (Emsheimer Festschrift, 1974, Studia instrumentorum Musicae popularis); and then, two studies dealing with popular songs performed by bards in Western Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon areas, where Gaborieau also did some of his six years' field research: "Les recits chantes de l'Himalaya et le contexte ethnographique" (in: Furer-Haimendorf, Contributions to the Anthrolopogy of Nepal, London, 1974) and "Classification des recits chantes: La litterature orale des hindous de l'Himalaya" (in: Poetique 19:1974). These studies mark the author as acquainted with modern methodological trends, like the Russian morphological school and the French structural approach; his acquaintance with the latter can also be deduce from an early theoretical essay, entitled "Anthropologie structurale et histoire", (in: Esprit, 1963) and last but not least from his contribution to L'Homme, the House Journal of Structural Anthropology. His, apparently provisional, concentration on folklore studies was rounded up by an introduction to a reprint of Oakley's and Gairola's Himalayan Folklore, in the Kuloy series. Finally, the author under review has written on a number of subjects, which cannot be easily grouped under a single heading, but nevertheless testify to his scholarly inclinations: "Unite et diversite des populations du Nepal" (in: Revue francaise des Elites europeennes, 1968) -- an antecedant to the present publication? --; "Note preliminaire sur le dieu Maṣṭa", (in: Objets et Mondes 9, 1:1969; English version in Hitchcock/Jones, Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas, London, 1976); "Les bayu du Nepal Central," (in: Puruṣārtha, 1975); "La transe rituelle dans l'Himalaya Central: folie, avatar, meditations", (in: Puruṣārtha, 1975); -- these latter three articles forming one contingent group, concerned with religious matters; then, an introduction to the republication of Hamilton's account of 1819 -- proof of Gaborieau's concern for former, now historical, reports --; and "Systemes traditionels d'echange de services specialises contre remuneration dans une localite du Nepal Central", (in: Puruṣārtha, 1977); followed by "Le partage du pouvoir entre les lignages dans une localite du Nepal Central", (in: L'Homme, 1:1978). Of these, the article on the western Nepalese god Maṣṭa is the most frequently cited. In it he delineates the functions of the dhami, incarnate oracle of the deity, and demarcates the geographical extensions of the cult. One may add, in parenthesis, that the cult and its

shrines extend further to the east than suggested by the author, i.e. Jajarkot and Tibrikot: there is a remarkable shrine of Maṣṭa in Maikot, 5 days' walk east of the former, and the same time distance of the latter, in the territory of the Northern Magar.

The preceding enumerations of Gaborieau's works to the present may be summed up in one statement: Over the last decade he has established himself, with ethnographic zeal and philological acrobacy, as one of the most refined and prolific scholarly sources on Himalayan anthropology. This in mind, his new book, Le Nepal et ses populations, strikes as a real surprise. For, instead of being particularistic, fighting out all the hackwork details of specified ethnographic enquiry, the new book provides a holistic look at Nepal in its totality, in historical and actual anthropological and sociopolitical terms. It is a handbook on everything. Does this courageous enterprise pay?

The hand-or guidebook character of Le Nepal is accentuated primarily by its physical appearance. It looks like a tourist book: pockety in size, with boutiqueish typography, with interjected cut-ups to the current text in fat type and didactic hinting arrows, as well as a lot of empty space on the type face fringe, (maybe for hurried notes of the hurried cultural traveller), - it is a typical world consumer's companion, designed for the big sale. Such a make up Le Nepal has hardly deserved and it reflects, I suppose, less the author's intentions than that it follows the constraints, imposed by the modern impresarios of serial book editions - and Le Nepal is in such a series. I turn, therefore, to the content of the book and its arrangement.

It is divided into three major parts, each of which has various subsections. Part one deals with the geographical setting of the country and the changing histories that have taken place in it (pp. 11-74). Part two, the core of the book, deals with the diversity of populations that inhabit Nepal (pp. 77-233). Part three, (pp. 236-283), tackles the problems that a country of such diversity faces, when confronted with the political aims of national unification. At the end of the book are presented several appendices; some sketchmaps (on historical sites, the administrative division of the country, the local distribution of the populations, and the landscape patterns); a concise bibliography; and a rough index. The appendices are partly statistical, giving numerical impressions - slightly dated - on the demography of the country, its ethnic and religious groups and on aspects of the national economy; partly, and this is new and therefore useful, they confront the major festive calendars of the Indo-Nepali, the Newar and the Muslims with one another. The interspersed cut-ups throughout the book inform in encyclopedic brevity on mixed topics: drugs, hippies, mystics, education, press, radio, transportation, 'trance, the sacred, food taboos and table manners, death rites, the Bonpo, a local kingdom in the West, the abolition of the caste laws, literature, politics in the fifties, urbanisation, the Sikhs in Nepal, the British influence, - in this order.

The major section of the First Part of the book is dedicated to the history of the country and has been segmented into four blocks: Ancient History, Middle Ages, Foundation of the Kingdom of Nepal, and the Present Period. To these blocks correspond, *cum grano salis*, several successive dynasties, the Licchavi dynasty (ca. 250-750 A.D.) to the first; those of the Thakuri, subdivided into 3 localized dynasties (ca. 1000-1200 A.D.) and of the Malla, equally composed of three main dynastic streams (ca. 1200-1750 A.D.) to the second; the empire, founded by Prithvi Narayan, and that of his successors (1768-1846), as well as the reign of the Rana (1846-1951) to the third; and to the last block the Modern Kingdom and the institutional intermission of a constitutional monarchy (1951-60). Gaborieau's flight over Nepal's history is sketchy, narrated in the short-breathed present tense of the enumerator, a style which is underlined by an abundant use of colons and semicolons. But the strokes of the sketch are strong: One gets an impression of important cultural lines that guided the course of the country through time, above all the early Indian influence with a predominance of Hinduism over Buddhism (the author calls the depiction of Early Nepal as a Buddhist country a legend, p. 30); the early codification of caste division; and the two grand axes of Newar civilisation in the valley and, later, Khas or Indo-Nepali civilisation in the West, which penetrated slowly and irresistibly to the East, gaining not only territorial, but also ground in political power.

At the other end of the book, in Part Three, the finale, certain of the historical trends, dealt with in the First Part, are taken up again as being pertaining factors for either centripetal or centrifugal tendencies for national integration, the proclaimed goal of the present day monarchy. The predominance of the caste system, for instance, can be seen in this light as both an integrative factor for unification and as a source for possible clashes between social groups or classes. Its integrative force resides, according to Gaborieau, in the fact that every social or ethnic group, indeed every individual and not only the Hindus, are given a definite place by it. The caste system is the most generally applied and therefore accepted social frame of reference, even for those, like some of the hill tribes, who traditionally never referred to it themselves. On the other hand, it seems obvious, from the statistical data presented, that the higher castes occupy, in unproportional majority, also the higher ranks of decision-making, which, in turn, for a state in transition, may be a cause for political struggle in the future. However, the caste system, as in contradistinction to caste legislation, which was officially abolished in 1963, is alive to a degree that it can bear opposing movements among its own adherents: The Indo-Nepali populations of Nepal have not only won hegemony over those that were not followers of their system and belief, but also have outnumbered in importance those populations, which themselves are defined by it, like the Newar and the Hindus of the Plains. Other factors are more clearly definable as either integrative or centrifugal. Amongst the integrative ones the author mentions the propagation of national identity (to be a Nepali first, and only then a Tamang, a Gurung or a caste member) and the introduction of the Panchayat system as a unifying tool for a homogeneous administration. As potentially

disintegrative forces the author names regional differences, like those between the valley and the distant hill regions; ethnic differences; and religious differences, which are mainly restricted to those between Hindus and Moslems. In this final part of the book Gaborieau tries, once more in admirable condensation, to point out the main problems and trends of a highly diversified country on its irrevocable path to unification.

The main and most lengthy part of the book is the one in the centre, devoted to the many populations that inhabit this Himalayan state. It concerns not only the general reader, but also the anthropologist.

Each attempt to bring Nepal's phenomenological wealth in ethnic diversity into a meaningful order will begin with the formulation of some classificatory principles that help to place the many groups, previously identified as entities. In fact, the identification of a group as a group will itself rely on such classificatory criteria. One such tool has been a linguistic criterion: membership of a group to such and such language family or branch of a language family. A more recent and fashionable one has been an ecological criterion: what geographical setting or "eco-zone" does this or that group belong to. A third one has been to base the classification on religious criteria: which beliefs are professed here or there. There are more, like sociological or historical criteria, and none is invalid in itself. They may, however, be invalidated, if they are applied in isolation. All one can say about Gaborieau's classification is that he has avoided to use only one of the principles. He divides the populations of Nepal into 3 main units: the Tribes, the Tibetan Enclaves and the Caste People and it is obvious that such a division amalgamates inexpressedly various, if not all, criteria mentioned above. The first of these units he subdivides, *prima facie*, along a geographical line: Tribes of the Plains and Tribes of the Midlands. Amongst the Plains people he names and discusses the Tharu; the Tribes of the east like the Dhimel, Santal, Mech, Jhangar and Rajbanshi; and the Tribes of the Rivers, - in my view an elegantly simple way of grouping together the Majhi, the Kumal, the Danuwar and the Darai. The Tribes of the Midlands are grouped under the following headings: Dismembered Tribes, The Large Tribes, The Tribes of Tibetan Affinity. The first of these headings is employed for remainders of once larger ethnic groups, like the nomadic Kusunda and Raute and the sedentarized Raji, Chepang and Hayu. (The Hayu could also be grouped with the Kirant). The author claims to have borrowed the term "Dismembered Tribes" from Hodgson, who, indeed, studied several of them in the last century; but the British diplomat had, if I remember well, actually coined them "Broken Tribes." As Large Tribes appear the Magar and the Kirant, the former divided into Kham Magar (plus Chantel) and Hinduised Magar, the latter into Thami, Sunwar, Jirel, (actually three quite small groups, also to be found on the fringes of Sherpa country) and the Rai and Limbu. The two remaining large tribes of the hills, Tamang and Gurung, are placed by Gaborieau into the category of Tribes of Tibetan Affinity, on the ground that both had assumedly immigrated, not too many centuries ago,

from the north into Nepal; that both speak languages more closely related to Tibetan than to the Tibeto-Burman dialects of other hill tribes and that their religion is, at least in one dimension, Lamaist.

The Tibetan Enclaves or Bhotya, whose different groups certainly all are Lamaist or, in a few instances, Bonpo, and who live on the northern high altitude borders, constitute the next large unit in Gaborieau's classification. He mentions specifically the Byanshi, the populations of Humla, Mugu, Dolpo and Mustang, the Thakali and the Sherpa. Others like the Nar-, Nyishang-, Nubri-, Tsum-, Langtang-, Yolmo-, Walung-groups and the so-called Lhomi of the Upper Arun remain unmentioned. As a matter of fact, the whole chapter on the Bhotya appears rather grainy and the author excuses this with the dotty state of research.

On safer ground, the author fills in the last of the three major units of his classification, the Caste People, where the Hindus of the Plains, the Moslems (for they, too, contrary to their egalitarian religious background, have forged their view of society into the model of caste hierarchy), the Newar and the Khas or Indo-Nepali are presented. This part of the anthropological exposé appears as the most rewarding: it is the lengthiest in the book, secured by the author's own ethnographic studies, and the most wanted, for it helps to see with more clarity the parallel, yet differentiated, positions of those key populations for Nepal's present and future, who have guarded a two thousand year-old Indian heritage in localized transformations. The treatment of Nepal's populations is generally very concise, concentrated, if ethnographic knowledge is available, on religious practices, social organisation and rites of passage. The information given is largely reliable and familiar to those acquainted with the current literature, which they reflect. On occasion, this literature, indispensable for a task like Gaborieau's, has not been consulted, and the result is a blank, as in the case of the Dhimai, who were repeatedly studied by Nepali scholars -- cf. R.R. Regmi, "purbai nepalko dhimal" (in: Ancient Nepal, 17:1971) or D.B. Bista's People of Nepal (chapters Dhimai and Bodo) where, following a tradition recorded by Upreti, the Dhimai are mythologically connected with the Limbu; this approachment is also made with the Lohrung Rai). Occasionally, the degree of generalization is astounding, as for instance in the statement that in their life cycle the Kham or Northern Magar pay most attention to the funerary rites. I think this is correct, but how does, how can Gaborieau know? On occasion again, specification might have done better than generalization: The treatment of the Rai might have been more convincing, had the author laid more stress on the differences amongst the various Rai groups, whom he doesn't even name; that may also be said of the Bhotya. In fact, the ethnography of the book bends to the West and the South, North and East being slightly under-represented. This finds its expression in the adjoined selection of photographs, all of which, with one single exception, have been taken in locations west of the central valley. As the author says in his very first sentence: "Everyone chooses a bit his own Nepal." But this does not, I think, disturb the

balance of the book, reassured through firm judgements on nearly all topics.

It is good at times to raise the head from the table and look around; it is good for the ethnographer, once in a while, to forget His village and take others around in consideration. For what counts more: the differences in the similarities or the similarities in the differences? Gaborieau has looked around and his view of a totality is clear. The time for detailed comparative studies in Himalayan ethnography with a holistic vision, however, is still far ahead.

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